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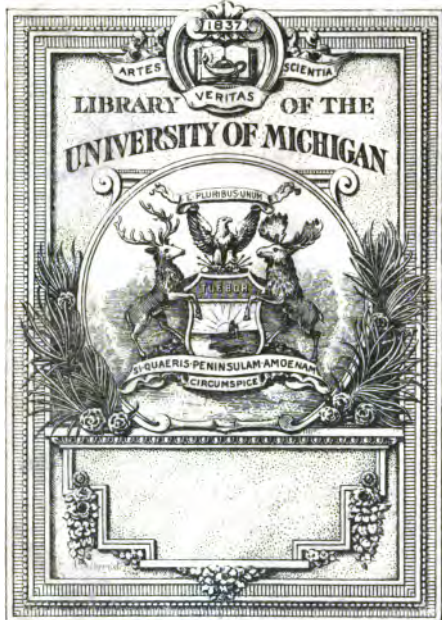
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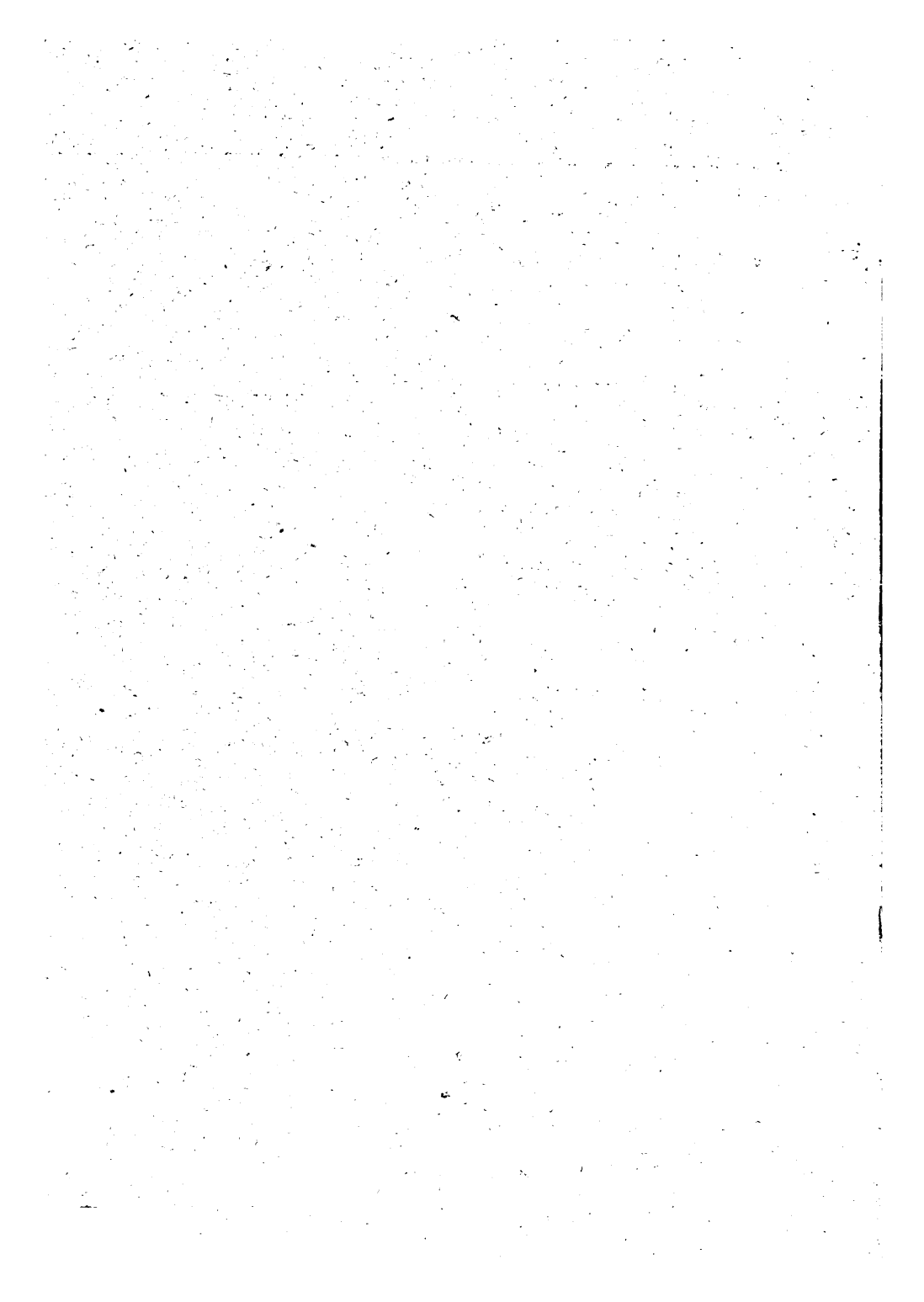


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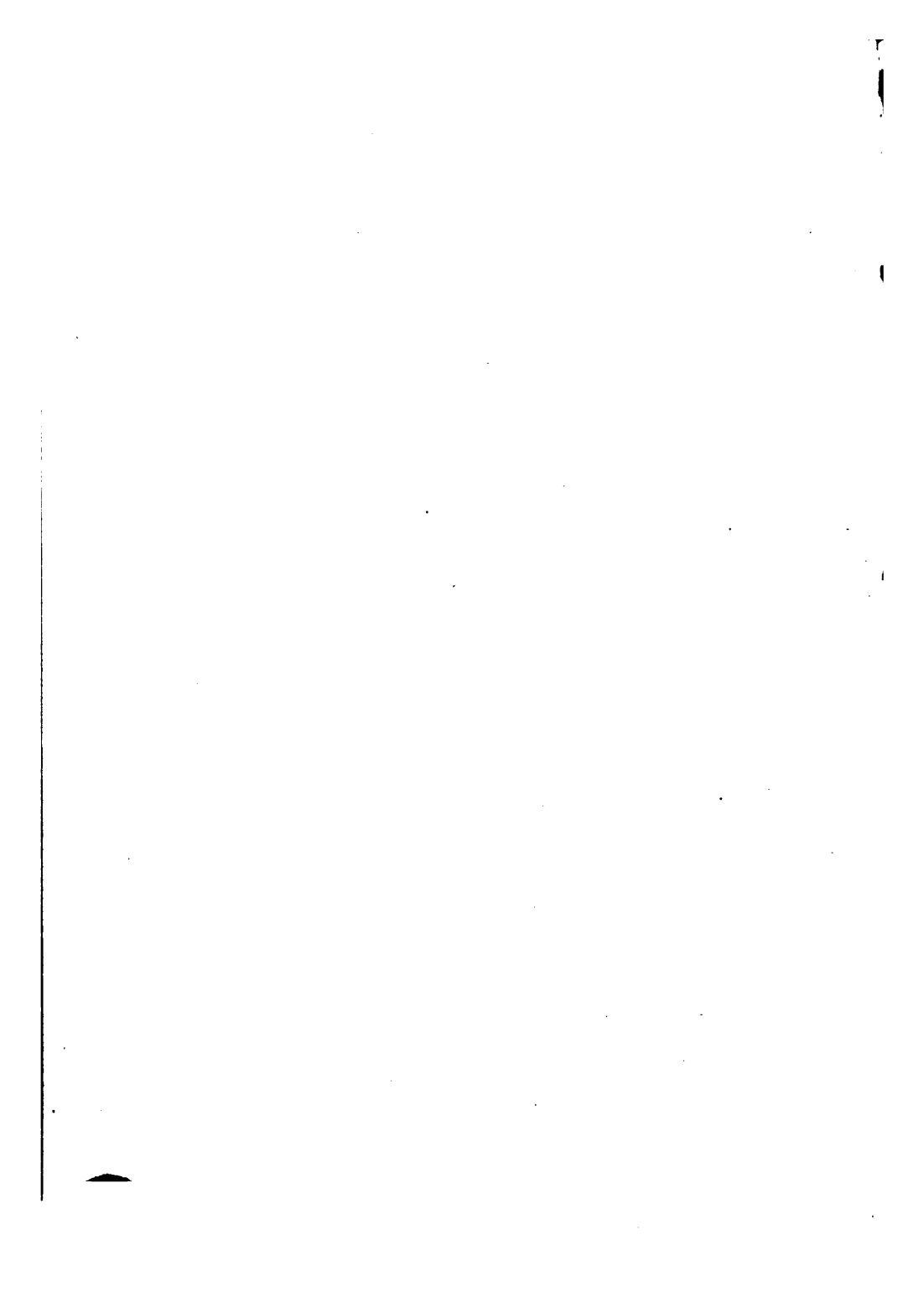
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MUNICIPAL REFORM  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES

60383

BY  
THOMAS C. DEVLIN



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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TO MY FRIEND  
W. H. MERRICK

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## PREFACE.

THE Science of Municipal Government in this country is crude. Our methods are expensive and our governments inefficient. The burden has become oppressive and nearly every city in the land is making some efforts for reform, and there are no cities where the same are not necessary. The ultimate results will be good, but their attainment through numerous failures may be slow and costly. Good government in this country must come from the people, and they must know what measures are desirable and what theories are visionary and impracticable. The student of municipal government can find abundant information in many books upon the subject. The newspapers and magazines have published numerous articles that are interesting and instructive to the average reader, but they present the subject in a promiscuous and disconnected manner.

If, after a somewhat careful study of municipal statistics, and some of the important contributions from painstaking students, the writer has presented his conclusions in a way that will be helpful to those citizens who should be interested in the good government of the cities in which they live, he has accomplished all he could desire.

This essay is not exhaustive. The subject is of such magnitude that the limitation of this volume necessitates superficiality. Suggestions on important subjects, each of which might appropriately be given a volume, are limited to a page. If the main lines of practical reforms are indicated, criticism of all other defects will be welcomed.

The writer has endeavored to give full credit to all whose works he has so freely made use of, but there is an indebtedness equally as great to the current thought and literature of the time which cannot be directly expressed. Special acknowledgment is due to the United States Consuls

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at London, Birmingham, Glasgow, and Berlin, the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics of the City of Paris, the Chief Burgo-master of Berlin, the City Chamberlain of Glasgow, and to the officials of numerous cities in the United States for valuable statistics furnished.

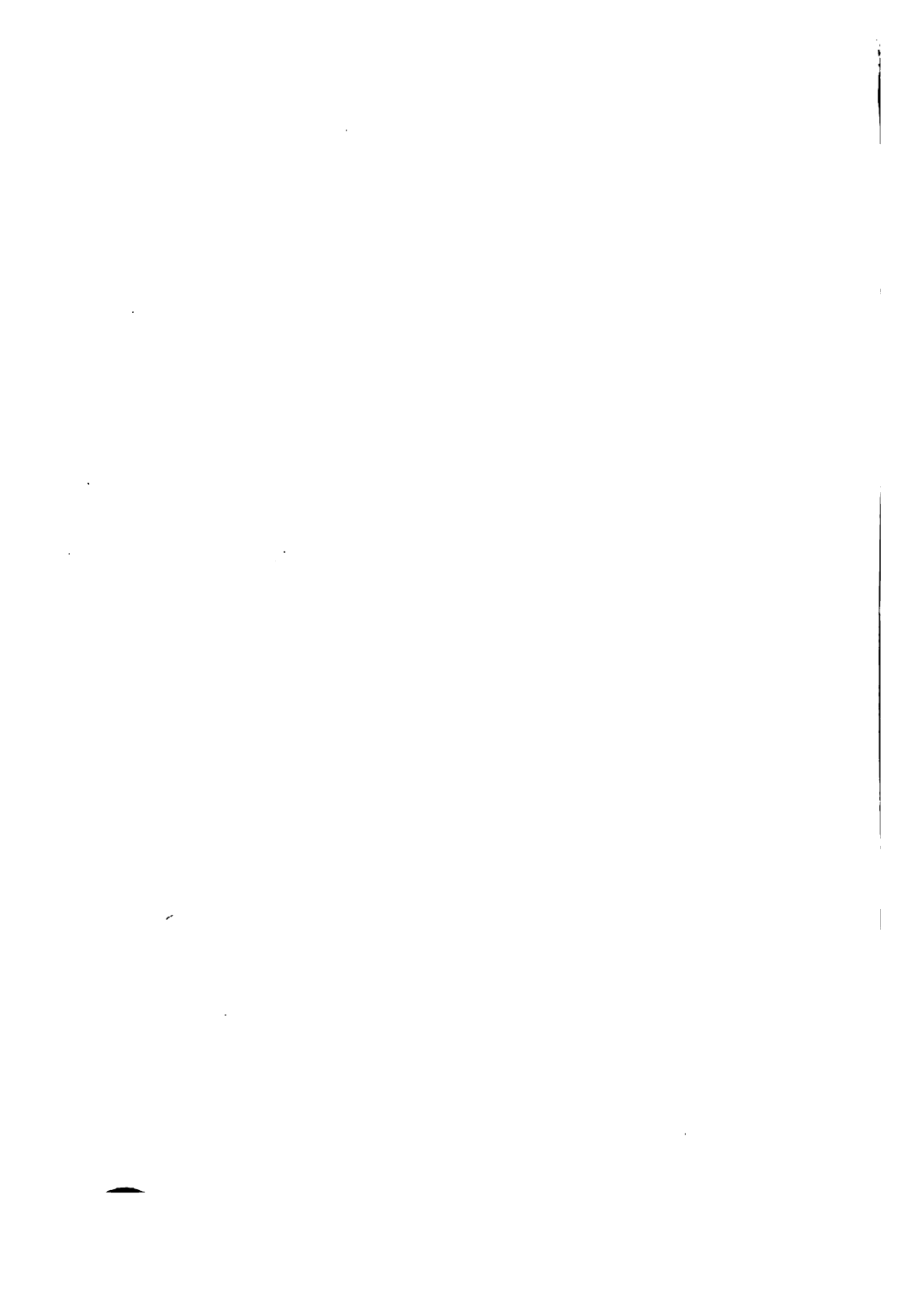
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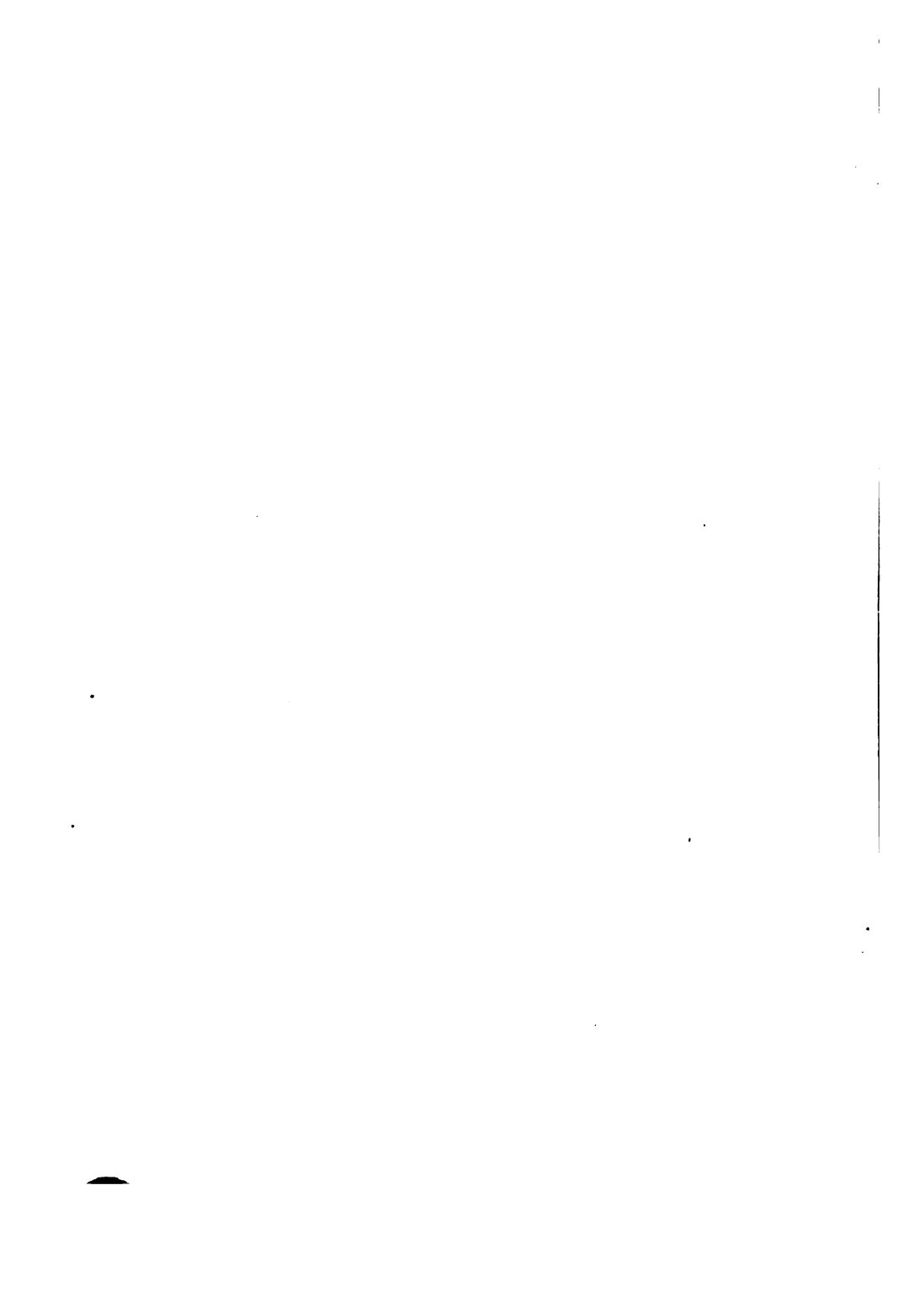
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An intelligent, continuous, persistent discussion and agitation by intelligent, unbiased, honorable men of the problems and methods of municipal government is the one thing needful. Such a discussion must tend to give substance and sanity and vigor to public opinion and it must bring a wholesome and powerful influence to bear upon existing government. . . . It must be possible, in every city, to call together such a body of intelligent, public-spirited men, who are willing to give time and effort to the education of the people upon this great subject of municipal government. The labor is one which will call for patience and self-sacrifice. It cannot be finished in a single campaign; it must be taken up with expectation that years of steady and persistent work will be required. Neither glory nor the spoils of office are to be counted on as a reward of such service; those by whom such a recompense is coveted will not be attracted by its summons.

REV. WASHINGTON GLADDEN, D.D.



## REFORM EFFORTS.

THE extraordinary growth of cities during the last twenty-five years has demanded much of their builders. A modern city represents many different interests. Enterprises either public or private that are hurried too much are very apt to be faulty in detail and more costly than if done more deliberately. It would be too much to expect that a constantly changing force of public officials, without precedent or experience, would devise a suitable system of government for a modern city and also perfect every work demanded by an estate of such magnitude. Rapid transportation, water supply, sewers, paved streets, electric lights, police and fire protection, etc., have all been demanded of the modern city with such rapidity as would have bewildered any

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community a half century ago. Many of these in the order of their importance have been, in a way, accomplished in American cities. They have cost large sums of money, but even this fact was almost unnoticed during the years of prosperity. The people demanded much and cared little about the methods or cost of accomplishment. A form of government for cities was least thought of, and as a result the present form of American city government, which is a sort of volunteer crop from the state and national systems, was accepted because it was the most available and easily understood. Changes have been made at times, but they have been the work of politicians or of some spasmodic effort for reform by the people. The people of late have taken more time to think about city government and they are finding it very unsatisfactory. It is without system or stability. It offers every opportunity for extravagance and no inducement for efficiency and honesty. "It has been the pawn in every other

political venture" and its interests have been neglected and sacrificed accordingly.

It must be remembered, however, that the shortcomings of government are not peculiar to this particular time, although they may be intensified by the greater problems which government must now solve. Politics and politicians are not worse than they used to be, although, as Henry Cabot Lodge says,<sup>1</sup> "There are admirers of the past who apparently consider that the only statesmen are dead statesmen and that living public men are mere 'politicians'—a word which has come to be a term of art. In the good old days—exact date not given—the evils of public life, according to this doctrine, did not exist. Everybody who held office then was good and able, and was chosen or appointed solely from merit, while selfish politicians and mercenary lobbyists were unknown." In fact the diseases of our body politic are long standing. All the great reforms are modern and are evi-

<sup>1</sup> Article in *Century Magazine*, October, 1890, p. 838.

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dence of our advancement in government as well as in other departments. If we have made less progress in our municipal affairs than other countries, or less than was expected of us, it has been because we have been hurried. We at least admit our failures, and our people are fast learning that there is no reason for the continuance of blundering mismanagement of municipal affairs, and the sooner it is replaced with permanent and systematic methods which will insure good government the brighter will be the outlook for the perpetuity of our national institutions.

As a result there is a widespread desire for municipal reform, and nearly every city has an organized society devoted to the task of devising plans for a more conservative and efficient administration of its affairs. That any one of these local organizations will accomplish great permanent good is doubtful, but widespread agitation will gradually develop specific plans and ultimately good government.

The greatest accomplishments of local

reform societies are short-lived because they possess inherent elements of failure. They have not sufficient courage and unselfishness. There are too many of their leaders who have interests at stake and are directly concerned in side-tracking the very reforms they profess to advocate. They lack breadth. They too often boast that they possess every virtue needful for the government of a model city, while those who differ from them, and especially present officials, are the embodiment of evil. Lunt's sarcastic description of an economist would apply equally well to a good many reformers. He says<sup>1</sup>: "In his right hand he carries the lance of excoriating satire, in his left the shield of unmeasured invective. Below are the greaves of vituperative epithet, and above the helmet of stinging sarcasm. His steed sniffs contention from afar, and leaps at the prospect of scurrilous engagement."

That there are able and well-meaning men in all those reform movements no

<sup>1</sup> Lunt, *Economic Science*, p. 8.

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one will question, but there are also "sore-head" politicians who nourish the rancor of defeat, and hare-brained theorists who have never had one practical thought in matters of personal interest. The reform societies too often labor in a rut. Their first effort is often to remove present officials, and elect from their own number honest and competent men. By pointing out here and there where ten, fifty, or an hundred dollars may be saved by reducing the salaries of officials or dismissing clerks or laborers, they appeal to the public for approval of their work. Their efforts are spasmodic and their work, even what is good, is temporary, for they do not study the requirements of a permanent system of government nor place themselves in touch with the best work of reform. Their work is confined to a few weeks of misdirected effort. Those who are interested in bad government work always. Again, general accusations of dishonesty and corruptness, without positive proof, detract from the possible



good of any reform movement. There are occasionally local reform societies, such as "The Vigilance League" in New York, under the aggressive policy of Dr. C. H. Parkhurst, which have accomplished large results. By his perseverance he gathered the necessary evidence to support his accusations in court, and the guilty were brought to trial and punishment. The character of no official was assailed where there was not reasonable evidence of guilt. The league commanded respect because it was not composed of office-seekers. But great as the work, which it has done, it is but one of many similar triumphs in New York City, and its history will be the same unless the "civic renaissance" is such that persistent and well-directed effort will continue.

The evils of American city government are far behind officials. No great enterprises can be well managed without system, nor can the best work be done by the most skilled mechanic with bad tools. Nor was the average American citizen

greatly interested in the penny-saving salary reductions of local officers when private enterprises occupied his time, but now, that he is giving the subject attention, show him how the city may be better lighted, the streets better paved and sewerred, the sanitary conditions improved, and the city made a more desirable place for residence and business, and a matter of great importance is presented to him. He will appreciate the increased benefits of an efficient and honest administration of public affairs far more than the reduced taxes that will be the result of permanent reforms. Show him how to build for permanent good. And here is another reason why reform societies are often discredited by a great majority of the people. The reformer is usually a radical. He has forgotten the wise admonition, "Hold fast that which is good." He wants to overturn everything, and each one has his own way for municipal salvation. There is little unanimity of effort. The reformer conveys an idea of destruc-

tion and is dreaded as much or more than the professional politician. The successful citizen does not follow such methods in business. The most effective reformers are conservative. They are constructive rather than destructive. They seek to amend methods to secure good men in office, rather than by unusual work to place good men in office where they are hampered by conditions and where satisfactory results are impossible. The fact is, the subject of government in American cities requires the attention of men who will study. The average local reform committee has proven itself no more capable of submitting an acceptable form of city government than the average city council is said to be capable of intelligently dealing with the complex and important matters submitted for its action.

No particular reform will cure all the ills which have taken hold upon our municipal life. Hon. Carl Schurz says<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> Address before the National Conference for Good City Government, Philadelphia, 1894.

“There is not a municipal government in this country, on whatever pattern organized, which will not work well when administered by honest, public-spirited, capable, and well-trained men. On the other hand, the best form of municipal government will work badly when administered by bunglers or knaves, the worse the longer they are in office.” This statement is true in part, and were it all true it offers no solution to the problems in American cities, for under our system it is impossible to elect and retain in office men of known honesty and ability. Dishonest and incompetent men will ruin any enterprise entrusted to them. The affairs of cities, if managed by all honest and capable men, would certainly be better managed than at present, but the experience of many cities proves that under our system, honest and fairly well qualified officers do not accomplish desired results. “The question of preventing the election of incompetent and disreputable persons to positions of responsibility does

not receive the attention that it deserves from those whom it most concerns in a direct and vital sense."<sup>1</sup> In almost every American city the people, at one time or another, have grown weary beyond endurance of partisan misrule and extravagance, and have given expression to their indignation through some form of citizens' movement, and good men of clean records have been given control of city affairs. What has been the result? The new officers have invariably found a system of government so honey-combed with the greed and selfishness of partisan politics and their actions so hampered by state legislation that no permanent good could be done. The people were impatient for results, and when not forthcoming their enthusiasm waned, the tidal wave of reform receded, the politicians quietly planned the next campaign, and the unworthy and incompetent resumed control of the great public estate.

Municipal reform in the United States

<sup>1</sup> St. Louis *Globe-Democrat*, 1892.

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is not so much a question of honest and capable men for the moment as it is of how to elect such men, retain them in office or dismiss them if they prove otherwise ; how to free the affairs of cities from the entanglements of other interests ; and how to adjust the powers and duties of officers so that the smallest evil may be easily detected and traced to the party responsible for it. It is not spasmodic and sensational reform such as has been accomplished at times that is wanted, but the establishment of permanent good government that will deserve and command the unqualified respect of all who come in touch with it.

To protect the lives and property of the people, to care for the morals, health, education, and protection of the community, to foster its interests, to manage its finances judiciously, to demand and secure the best service in every work under its supervision, are all within the purview of city government. Shall these be done well or shall the evils that have followed in the wake of great national progress

finally engulf the whole? There is more national patriotism and local pride than ever before, but less civic spirit. This too is being aroused, and the intelligence and energy which have accomplished so much in the development of industries and the building of cities will also find good forms of government.

The local reform societies which will hasten the desired reforms in the government of cities will be those which can lay aside the bickerings and strife of local politics; which can discard the old idea that reform necessitates complete destruction of that which is; which can recognize good in many present officials, whose personality is proof against the bitter accusations of ignorant gossipers or defeated politicians and whose co-operation would materially advance the best interests of cities; and which link themselves with larger orders and profit from the thought of the most advanced students of the subject.





In carrying on your battle for decency remember one thing : if you are to win you must win by being straight out Americans, and by conducting your campaign in the regular American spirit. If you try to organize your movement on any line of caste, on any line of birthplace or of creed, you will be beaten, and you will deserve to be beaten. Go into our politics simply as Americans. Work heartily with the man in whose ideas you believe and who believes in your ideas, without any reference to whether he is Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Protestant, whether he was born here or abroad, whether he is a banker or a butcher, a professor or a hod-carrier, a railway president or the proprietor of a corner store ; in short act as Americans and as nothing else. . . . If you wish to accomplish anything in the field of municipal reform you must be upright and disinterested ; you must be practical and willing to work hard and not merely criticise ; you must be American through and through, in temper and spirit and heart, and you must possess the essential virtues of manliness, of resolution, and of indomitable courage.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.



## AMERICAN CONDITIONS.

IN summing up the shortcomings of American cities, it has been very easy to make comparisons with European cities and to suggest the adoption of the same principles of government and methods of administration under which those cities have been made models for efficiency and economy. It is, however, the opinion of those who have studied most carefully the municipal problem in the United States that no material aid can be had from the adoption of European methods in matters of city government. A study of those methods is profitable so far as it teaches us what has been done well and what results are possible in a city properly governed. We may profit by the experience of European cities, but we cannot imitate their methods. We do not wish to accept

or reject anything because it is foreign, but at the same time it may be well for those who are disseminating principles of reform in this country to be conservative, and for those to whom theories of reform are addressed to study them carefully.

The model cities in Europe, notwithstanding their progress in socialism, are crowded with a class who look upon anarchy and the reign of destruction which it advocates as the only remedy for existing inequalities. It is therefore of importance that in laboring for better government we keep before us the fact that we are Americans in spirit and in truth, and that the institutions we seek to benefit are ours, are American, and that our purpose is to preserve to our people the same virtues, manliness and courage, which have made American progress possible.

There are conditions peculiar to municipal life and politics in the United States which preclude the adoption of methods elsewhere successful. "Direct inferences

from the success or failure of a particular constitutional arrangement or political usage in another country are rarely sound, because the conditions differ in so many respects that there can be no certainty that what flourishes or languishes under other skies and in another soil will likewise flourish or languish in our own.”<sup>1</sup> And as Prof. Smith says<sup>2</sup>: “We have all sorts of ‘strangeness’ in the population of the United States. We have ‘strangeness’ of blood, of birthplace, of parentage, of institutions, of political practice, of social ideals.”

These conditions, peculiar to the United States, are doubtless the cause of much of the evil and extravagance complained of, but for the present they may be deemed permanent and will bear little modification. These conditions are not to be fought as an evil in themselves but considered as desirable, and institutions of

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, third edition, Introductory, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Smith, Columbia College.

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government must be planned that will harmonize conflicting elements, control them, and make them contribute to the happiness, prosperity, and well-being of the nation as a whole.

### COSMOPOLITAN CITIZENSHIP.

No European city has a population made up of so many nationalities. This is not a threatening element in our municipal life, but it is perplexing. Prof. Edward J. James in referring to this condition said<sup>1</sup>: "The mixture of so many nationalities, the lack of homogeneousness in the population, has made the problem of city government infinitely more difficult than it otherwise would have been. You may take good elements from half a dozen different populations, throw them together into one political community, and immediately a new set of difficulties in the government of that community will arise from lack of homogeneity of political ideas, of intellectual sympathies, etc." The old

<sup>1</sup> Address before the National Conference for Good City Government, Minneapolis, 1894.

principles of home life with its manifold influences remain the basis of government as well as of social life, and in cities representing, we may say, a single nationality and who hold in common the same traditions, follow the same customs, have the same tastes, desires, and ambitions, it must be infinitely easier to manage those numerous enterprises of common interest which modern municipal collectivism has placed under the control of municipal government.

#### LEGISLATIVE INTERFERENCE.

The free cities of Germany and those of Great Britain under the municipal code are far more democratic than American cities inasmuch as they enjoy absolute home rule. The political activity of the people is centred in their cities. In the United States the city is hampered by state legislatures and has been of minor importance in the political thought of the people. If there is one important lesson in the study of European municipal gov-

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ernment, it is in the autonomy of the cities and the responsibility of the government to the citizens who make it. In Europe the functions of municipalities in matters purely local are clearly defined, and in these matters they are given large powers. In all matters of general government in which the municipality acts in the capacity of agent for the central government, its sphere of action is likewise definitely defined and subjected to central administrative control. In the United States, however, no well-directed effort has been made to distinguish between the powers and duties of the municipality as the agent of the state administering general powers, and as a local corporation.<sup>1</sup> It is subject in both to legislative control, and these bodies, without knowledge of the requirements of cities, or pride in them, or responsibility to citizens of the cities, and ambitious only in advancing selfish interests, have so muddled matters that there is no telling

<sup>1</sup> A recent volume entitled, *Municipal Home Rule*, by Frank J. Goodnow, is an excellent work on this subject.



what the law is. As stated by the Commission appointed in the State of New York in 1876 to draft a form of government for cities: "The multiplicity of laws relating to the same subject thus brought into existence is itself an evil of great magnitude. What the law is concerning some of the most important interests of our principal cities can be ascertained only by the exercise of the patient research of professional lawyers. In many instances even professional skill is baffled." This is an American condition which all experience teaches us should be changed. Our cities must be liberated from legislative interference, in matters of general government subjected to central administrative control, and in matters of purely local interest given powers commensurate with tasks and responsibilities which modern cities impose.

#### UNRESTRICTED FRANCHISE.

The matter of franchise is one of the most distinguishing features between

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American and European city governments and which in a measure renders the adoption of European methods impractical. All the powers of government in Europe are in the hands of the property-owning class. In Germany, the three-class system of voting, while affording the masses a pretense of power, gives to the wealthier classes absolute control of municipal affairs. Albert Shaw says<sup>1</sup>: "The English municipal electorate excludes in practice nearly all the unmarried men, all floating laborers and lodging-house sleepers, and nearly all the serving class." In England, the burgesses elect a council and the council elect alderman, mayor, and all other administrative officers. Such a restricted franchise, as we shall see presently, it is useless to discuss, and city government as in England would afford opportunities for a veritable carnival of evil and one which English municipalities may yet have to contend with. In the matter

<sup>1</sup> Albert Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, p. 45.

of unrestricted franchise the United States is undertaking an experimental work of great importance and which has particular force in city affairs. All government has been in the hands of the rich, but the United States places its vast estates within the reach of the poor. "No distinction is recognized of governing and governed classes, and the problem of government is, in effect, an effort on the part of society as a whole to learn and apply to itself the art of government."<sup>1</sup> The limitation of the franchise, advocated by many as a means of reform, is of vital importance. If necessary, an ideal democracy is a failure. As the subject of restricted franchise will not be referred to again as a possible or desirable reform, at the risk of being tedious a synopsis of the argument in its favor is presented with some reasons why it is not practical.

A study of the franchise in American cities shows that the non-taxpaying voters

<sup>1</sup> Hon. Seth Low in Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, vol. i., p. 651.

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are a large majority. Taking Boston for instance, the registered vote of Boston in 1892 was 73,000. There were 32,407 taxpayers, of whom 3200 were women having no vote and about 700 aliens or non-residents. Deducting the taxpayers who are not voters leaves 28,507 as the number of property-holding votes out of a registered vote of 73,000. If every tax-paying voter voted this shows the non-property vote at 46,693 against a property vote of 28,507.<sup>1</sup>

It is said that cities are business concerns in which every taxpayer holds an interest, and there is a persistent demand that its affairs shall be conducted on business principles. Then it seems not unfair that representation in the city should be limited, as in a business corporation, to the stockholders, if the same results are desired. If this hypothesis is correct, we must admit that no business would succeed under management similar to cities. Take one of the great

<sup>1</sup> Frank Morrison in *The Forum*, August, 1892.

railroad corporations, for instance, and imagine its board of directors, who are to manage its business and dictate its policy, elected by a vote of all those who are incidentally connected with it from the manufacturers of its rolling-stock to the "butchers" on its trains, and from the largest of its shareholders to the intemperate and improvident trackman. All are, it may be said, interested in the prosperity of the road, even more than the non-taxpaying residents are interested in a city, but no person believes such a policy could be maintained. The owning of property may not be taken as an infallible standard of intelligence in matters of voting, but it is good evidence of thrift, economy, and a certain degree of intelligence, and the investment of such property in a place and in such manner that it will be taxed, indicates confidence in the place and a willingness to bear part of the burdens necessary to its growth. It is also certain that persons will be more careful in voting expenditures when they

are to pay part of them, and that extravagance is advocated most by those who bear no part of the sacrifices they impose.

It is also true that the ignorant, vagrant, and purchasable element comes almost wholly from the non-taxpaying class, and their only interest in an election is the price they may receive for their votes. They are an element of especial solicitude to the ward politician, and are often the decisive power in partisan contests. Indeed, it may be further said, that integrity, honor, and ability will never prevail, in city councils particularly, until the candidates may safely disregard the demands of the worst elements of society and know that their election depends upon citizens who hold those virtues to be their chief qualifications.

Cities are social organizations. They care for many interests, and engage in enterprises that could not be considered by business concerns organized for profit only. The city is an humanitarian institution. The care of its poor is every-

where one of its great problems, and the advocates of a restricted franchise tell us truly that the owning of property rather qualifies one to deal intelligently with this condition. It may be shown that the most effective charity in every country is from persons of means who have schooled themselves in self-denial. In the United States the greatest crimes against the poor result from the inexperience and incompetency of men whose duty is to administer to their relief. In many respects municipal government in the United States is a shame and a disgrace, but its most deplorable results are the sufferings which it inflicts upon the poor. The well-to-do may worry along with high taxes and the concomitant annoyances of a poor administration, for with superior knowledge and thrift they adjust their affairs to circumstances, but at the end of society the burden falls with distressing weight. The health of the poor in cities must be guarded, security from want provided, their happiness promoted, their self-re-

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spect and independence encouraged, and they must be taught thrift as well as industry ; and these works are surely best done by men who through personal experience and individual effort have studied the problem of self-sustenance.

On the other hand, cities are business concerns only in their least important functions. Only in the paving and cleaning of streets, providing light and water, etc., where through their officers as agents for the taxpayers they are doing those things which each could do for himself, although with less uniformity and greater inconvenience, are cities business concerns. Again, every citizen of good impulses, no matter how poor, is infinitely more interested in the good government of the community where he lives, than he is in the prosperity of any business corporation with which he is temporarily employed. Patriotism more often outweighs selfishness with the poor than with the rich. Experience has proven that neither manhood suffrage nor the foreign



vote is responsible for bad city government. "So far back as 1814 the Mayor's office of the city of New York was traded in national politics, and this when the appointment was made by a State Council of appointment consisting of the Governor and four state Senators elected by the lower house." Also many of the most dishonest and extravagant proceedings in the history of American cities have resulted from commissions appointed by state authority and for which no vote of the people could be responsible.

The great majority of the non-taxpaying class are honest and industrious. Only a small percentage of them is the "ignorant, vagrant, and purchasable element," which profits by the sale of their votes. They do not equal in number the taxpaying class who buy votes and who are directly interested in the perpetuation of bad government. When we consider those taxpayers who rent property for saloons, for places of gambling and prostitution, and their associates in business to

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whom the non-enforcement of law, or the power to purchase immunity, is a permanent source of profit; all those taxpayers interested in improvements that enhance the valuation of certain districts; all who want franchises; all who are interested in contracts, etc., we realize how unworthy some taxpayers are of the privilege of the ballot. After all is it not true that where corruption is practised it emanates from the intelligent and respectable classes? When immense campaign funds are raised the poor and ignorant do not contribute. Partisan enthusiasm and selfish interests smother patriotism and conscience, and the better citizens, the upright and honorable members of society, provide the means of evil. Then who are the most responsible, the good citizens and taxpayers, or the poor, miserable, hungry, rum-craving mortal before whom is placed the temptation of selling his vote? Then again where corporations, and chartered monopolies and large private interests have matters to be looked after, protection to be secured, privileges to be

granted, or certain business to be fostered which may be influenced by legislation, and whose agents trade in legislation in advance of election, is not the corruption from such sources as far-reaching and as deadly as the vote-selling by the poor and depraved? Clearly the moneyed interests that spread corruption broadcast are more dangerous than the unfortunates whom they tempt.<sup>1</sup>

When it is fully known where the danger of municipal government really is, there will be less agitation for a property qualification on the part of electors. A good many students of city government have noticed that our principal difficulty is with our "good citizens." "Universal suffrage, as it exists in the United States, is not only a great element of safety in the present day and generation, but it is perhaps the mightiest educational force to which the masses of men ever have been exposed."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Century Magazine*, July, 1892, p. 473.

<sup>2</sup> Hon. Seth Low in Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, vol. i., p. 666.

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The principle of unrestricted suffrage is backed by the whole political sentiment of the American people. It is one of the conditions that prevents the adoption of many European methods. It is the direct application of the principle of equality of rights, powers, and privileges regardless of possessions, attainments, or conditions. Nor has it been wholly vicious, for it has been the most potent influence in building up and cementing together the greatest institutions of our national life. The advantages of withholding the ballot from the poorest and humblest may be ideal but not practical. It is one of those conditions like our cosmopolitan citizenship, peculiar to the United States, and which necessitates that we devise a system of government that will meet our wants. It is possible that the opportunity for evil may be removed without encroaching upon the privileges which citizenship confers. Again, it is not improbable that instead of being behind Great Britain and Germany in the perfection of a form of municipal

government we are really in advance. As the people there gradually acquire greater privileges and power, which they are demanding, the same conditions may arise which now confront us. The only restriction of the franchise at all practical, and which will be approved by every patriotic citizen of the country, is to deny the ballot to every person convicted of crime and to demand an educational test of every foreigner who desires the privilege of citizenship. Residence is not a sufficient qualification, nor would it be of advantage to require a longer time, for such would withhold the ballot from many who would otherwise be eminently well qualified and would make desirable citizens. But every citizen should be required to read the Constitution in the English language, write legibly, understand the election laws, and have a knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. "Safeguards of the Suffrage," by Rev. Washington Gladden, *Century Magazine*, February, 1889.

URBAN COLLECTIVISM.

The material advancement of the last fifty years has effected a revolution in the social conditions of all progressive nations. The manners and customs of the people have undergone radical changes. Industries have been multiplied and old methods of labor abandoned. Through intellectual agencies, production has been largely increased. The innumerable devices in farm machinery have lessened the percentage of people formerly engaged in agricultural pursuits, and the demand for those implements and many other necessities of modern civilization has given a great impetus to manufacturing, and so enlarged and diversified the labor of cities that there has been a continued exodus from the farm until the growth of cities is the most remarkable feature of our time. Such urban collectivism would have been impossible at any earlier period of history because of the dependence of cities upon a very limited territory surrounding them. The number of manufactured articles in

common use was small, the processes of agriculture were primitive and slow, thus reversing the markets for labor as they now exist. Improved methods of transportation have freed cities from dependence upon local territory otherwise such vast populations could not exist. This condition is not peculiar to the United States, for many European cities have grown enormously, but there have been greater opportunities here, greater activity, and with natural increase augmented by foreign immigration, all the influences and perplexities of this new life are here intensified. This growth in European cities has not been proportionately as large, for there each city was a centre of wealth and a conservative population which could and did aid much in solving the demands of the new growth.

This magical growth of cities has been the pride of the people. The metropolis of each state is a sort of Mecca for its people. The cities have become a gigantic power in the political and social life of

the nation. It is the intellectual force of the American cities which shapes legislation through state and national conventions. Within them are all the allurements and excitements of modern life. They are the centres of art, literature, and learning. They contain the great schools, art galleries, music halls, theatres, and all absorbing entertainments, and their manners, morals, and fashions are copied throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> The restless and ambitious rush with eager steps to plunge into these whirlpools of life. This movement is necessarily attended by many evils, and much has been said and written to counteract the crowding of cities. Such efforts are useless. The present population of cities is permanent. The evils which have been incidental to their rapid growth must be eliminated. Living in cities must be desirable. "The moral and educational environment must be made such as to produce the best re-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Address by ex-Governor Alva Adams before Monday Evening Club, Pueblo, Colorado.



sults and to preserve the virtue, intelligence, industrial capacity, and physical stamina of the race.”<sup>1</sup>

The growth of cities has been too rapid, the demands upon them too sudden, and the excitement in business too absorbing, to give to the subject of local government the attention it merits and therefore it has been hap-hazard, without system or economy. As Hon. Seth Low says<sup>2</sup>: “It is not strange that a people conducting an experiment in city government for which there is absolutely no precedent, under conditions of exceptional difficulty, should have to stumble towards correct and successful methods through experiences that are both costly and distressing.”

In many instances what good citizens have neglected to do, others have taken hold of and are managing with little respect for law, and less for right and decency. But the outlook is hopeful. There

<sup>1</sup> Albert Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, p. 10.

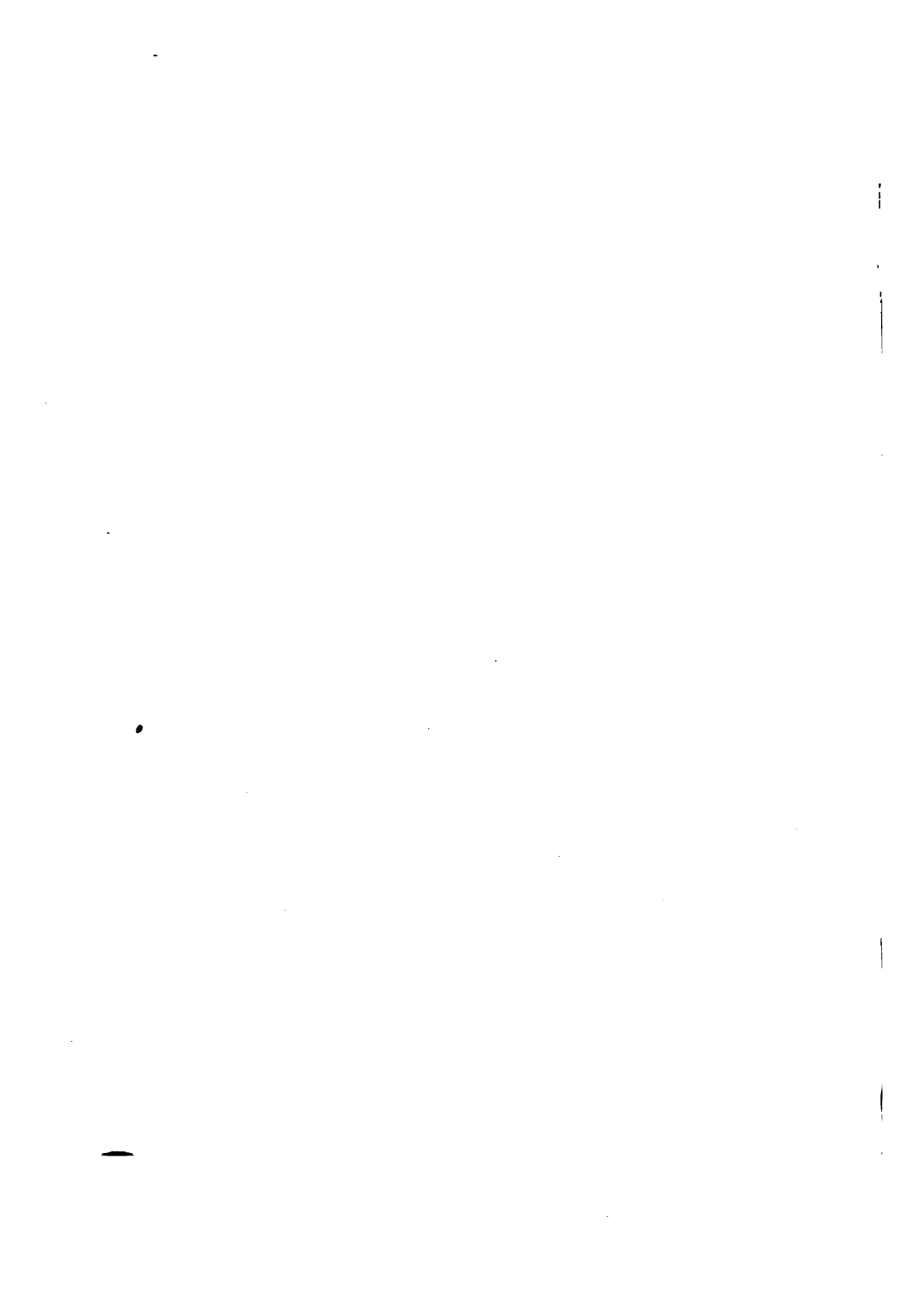
<sup>2</sup> Hon. Seth Low in Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, vol. i., pp. 664, 665.

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have been great improvements during the last decade. Good citizens are realizing the dangers of further negligence, and thoughtful men in every part of the country are devoting themselves to remedying existing evils by formulating a system of local government that will meet the conditions of American cities and yet be in perfect accord with the broad principles of our government.

The history of the elective franchise can be traced in blood, for it is blood-bought. Let it be preserved, even though it be at the cost of blood and human life. Let no citizen, because of his respectability and because of his desire to avoid the unpleasant or unclean things of life, stand back and keep apart from political life. Political life ought to be free and clean and pure. Let him take his respectability with him and aid in accomplishing this result. Armed with courage, awake to conscience, desiring alone the triumph of the right, let every patriot stand for the ballot, maintain its freedom, preserve its purity, and make it the very base and corner-stone on which the superstructure of a perfect municipal system shall be upbuilt, and the perpetuity of our free institutions securely rest.

HON. GEO. S. GRAHAM.  
District Atty. for Philadelphia.



## ELECTIONS.

WHATEVER differences of opinion may exist as to the relative merits of reform methods in municipal government, it is agreed that elections should be honestly conducted. ~~The more extended the privileges of voting are, the more imperative it becomes to enact and enforce laws that will preserve the power of our elections as originally intended.~~ There can be no hope of honest, intelligent, and efficient government resulting at any time, from an election where premeditated crime is committed by organized criminals. In a government by the people, the health and vigor of national life depend upon honest elections.

It is a significant fact that English elections, where the baneful influences of tramps, criminals, floaters, lodging-house

tenants, etc., are unknown, are seldom pointed out to us by advocates of English methods of government, as worthy of our emulation, notwithstanding the great reform that has been effected there since the passage of the Corrupt Practices Act in 1883. There has been as much bribery and trading there as here, and campaigns are now more boisterous, uncouth, and ruffianly. As Mr. James Bryce says<sup>1</sup>: "Not even the poorest ward in New York City sinks below the level of such constituencies as Yarmouth and Sandwich used to be in England. Bribery is seldom practised in America in the same way as it used to be at Rome, by distributing small sums among a large mass of poor electors, or even, as in many English boroughs, among a section of voters (not always the poorest) known to be venal, and accustomed to reserve their votes till shortly before the close of the poll. The American practice has been to give sums of from \$20 to \$50 to an active local worker, who

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, vol. ii., pp. 146, 147.

undertakes to bring up a certain number of votes, perhaps twenty or thirty, whom he owns or can get at. He is not required to account for the money, and spends a comparatively small part in direct bribes, though something in drinks to the lower sort of electors." When President Seelye of Amherst College was elected to Congress as an independent candidate from a district in western Massachusetts, his campaign expenses were only three cents, the cost of a postage stamp in replying to the notice sent to him of his nomination.<sup>1</sup> Such a thing now would be very remarkable, if possible. It is more common to spend several thousand dollars.

The large majority of Americans, and especially in the large cities, have peculiar and mistaken ideas of the sovereignty of the individual citizen. It is something they like to talk about and believe they possess. The fact is, that the way in which elections have been managed, and the failure of good citizens to fully appre-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Century Magazine*, July, 1887, p. 470.

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ciate the responsibilities of self-government, and their apathy to the performance of duties incumbent upon them as citizens, have nearly destroyed whatever sovereignty which franchise conferred. The power of the average citizen in city affairs, except during times of civic revivals, is limited to a choice of two partisan bosses, who shall have control of the city's business to conduct it in the interest of himself and his associates. Even in this limited sense he is influenced by partisan passion. Citizen sovereignty can be re-established only by awakening the people to a realization of their duties, teaching them that self-government entails certain work which can not properly be delegated to any one, and certainly not to those who are least competent and least worthy of the trust, and the passage of election laws which will curtail the power of bosses in deciding elections by a hopeless minority of intemperate, improvident, and criminal voters. Not less important is prompt and severe punishment for election frauds.



Every state provides by law penalties for election frauds, but the laws are seldom enforced. Usually it is a crime which is not only tolerated but rewarded.

The people of the United States want a "free vote and a fair count." The Australian system has effected great good, but there is much more to be done. In many places the colonized voters and repeaters accomplish the same results the ballot-box stuffer formerly did. It has been proven that these evils may be obviated by a well enforced method of registration and punishment of those guilty of violating election laws.

"In San Francisco a voter registering must give his age, height, weight, color of eyes, hair, complexion, etc.; in other words, it is a passport registration, and the registry book identifies the voter, so that a careful inspector can prevent the false personation of an elector."<sup>1</sup> "In Alabama a statute was enacted in February, 1893,

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Conkling, *City Government in the United States*, p. 189.

providing 'that each registrar shall, at the time of his registration, furnish to each elector who may register a certificate of registration.'" A subsequent section contains these words: "That in order to prevent repeating, no elector shall be allowed to receive a ballot from the inspectors nor to cast a ballot, until he shall have produced and surrendered to the inspectors of election at the polling-place the certificate of registration herein before provided for."<sup>1</sup> In some states the registration laws require the elector to write his name with some additional educational qualification. In those states there is little if any complaint of a limited franchise, because the restriction is not permanent and it seems not too much to require that the elector shall be able to read and understand the ballot he deposits.<sup>2</sup>

The cities of Albany and Troy, in New York, and St. Louis, Missouri, have local

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. "Safeguards of the Suffrage," by Washington Gladden, *Century Magazine*, February, 1889.

discrimination  
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of blacks

organizations devoted to the task of preventing fraud either in registrations or at elections, and the prosecution and punishment of criminals guilty of such. Each of these organizations has done good work and it is certain that no branch of municipal government affords a better field for earnest, practical, and valuable service by a local society.

It is not sufficient that the political boss shall be denied the privilege of arranging and counting the votes. This was his most delightful occupation, but he still finds steady and remunerative employment where he is allowed to name the candidates for office. For the correction of this evil many remedies are suggested, but most of these, such as the elimination of politics, a permanent citizens' party, etc., are iridescent dreams and are unworthy of serious consideration. City government, like all other government, is a matter of politics, and our success in self-government must be determined by the purity of our politics and the wisdom

of our politicians. "Politics proper is the formulation and consideration of policies to be carried into practice in the administration of government adapted to the organism of the particular government to be administered,"<sup>1</sup> or, "that method of administering public affairs which will best promote the safety, peace, and prosperity of the whole people."<sup>2</sup>

It is of the utmost importance that the advocates of municipal reform stop chasing sunbeams and make use of those institutions at hand. The primary election is a distinguishing and essential feature of our institutions. Its possibilities are good, but it must be given protection similar to the Australian law. The theory of the nominating convention is all right. It is the feature of representative government whereby the wisest and best men of a community may act for, and express the will of the majority. The manner in which delegates are chosen

<sup>1</sup> C. H. Reeve, in *American Journal of Politics*, September, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> *Century Magazine*, May, 1892, p. 154.

and conventions manipulated is all wrong. The delegates to conventions should be chosen at primaries regulated by laws providing absolute secrecy. The ballots should be prepared and furnished according to law, and the state, county, or city should provide them. A certain number of persons should have the privilege of having the names of proposed delegates printed upon the ballots by submitting them in proper time to the official whose duty it would be made to prepare the ballots, and every person entitled to vote should be assured freedom and protection.

At an extra session of the legislature of Missouri, a bill was introduced (Apr. 23, 1895) for the purpose of purifying elections. This bill was prepared by the "St. Louis Committee of Safety" and by many is considered a remedy for election evils. It certainly contains many good provisions and is worthy the consideration of those interested in this branch of reform, but it seems too cumbersome, too slow, and too costly a measure. Another ex-

cellent measure is the Corrupt Practices Act in force in Massachusetts and New York, although there is room in both for great improvement. A corrupt practices act to be effective must be so minute and specific and so comprehensive that to accumulate sufficient evidence to assure conviction shall be a very easy matter. Any qualified elector within an election district should be allowed to prefer charges of illegal election practices. To demand a sworn statement of the costs of election with detailed accounts of receipts and expenditures would be desirable but hardly practical. The ways of avoiding any accurate showing are too many. But it is possible to remove offending candidates from office and to disqualify them for a certain period of years. Finally, all contested elections should be tried before a non-partisan court. No legislative body should be allowed to pass upon the qualifications of its members. In every legislative body the contested places are decided in favor of the controlling party, regard-

less of the irregularity of election proceedings.

The particular merits of any proposed laws are of little importance compared with awakening each community to the atrociousness of election frauds and a desire to punish the perpetrators of election crimes the same as other criminals are punished. . This being done, practical laws will be enacted and more honorable methods and a more enduring form of government will be secured to American cities.

The idea of completely removing the "machine" or central power from election campaigns is neither practical nor desirable. The most persistent workers for reform advocate organization, municipal leagues, citizen movements, etc., and all this necessitates leadership, authority at some place—a machine. "Somebody must collect rather large sums of money, must arrange for meetings, must supply speakers, must distribute documents, must organize clubs, must arouse enthu-

siasm, must call primaries and conventions. . . . The organization which does this work is the machine. So far it is not only a necessity but a blessing. Whenever in addition it controls primaries, packs conventions, dictates nominations, levies assessments on candidates and criminals, and buys votes with offices and with money, it is a curse."<sup>1</sup> Every person acquainted with politics knows the abuse of machine power ; how, instead of doing the will of the party, it suppresses it in the interests of a boss, and how parties, rather than accept defeat, have accepted candidates named by the machine who were in every way unworthy of office. It is possible to retain this feature of American politics for the good there is in it and to even increase its influence and also destroy its possibility for evils to which it has been applied. The ballot is the foundation stone of our democracy. We must begin at the be-

<sup>1</sup> Alfred Bishop Mason, *Proceedings National Conference for Good City Government*, Philadelphia, 1894, p. 189.



ginning, at the foundation, if we would have good government. Every ignorant vote, every purchased vote, every bribe given, every convention that is packed, every crime of whatever nature against the sacredness of our ballot, is a blow at the roots of our republican institutions. All the dishonesty, extravagance, ignorance, and incompetency in all departments of our government may be traced to, and have their origin in any one of the numerous election crimes.

The utmost care must be continuously exercised to provide against election laws being impaired through compromises with politicians who have not felt the force of public opinion in favor of honesty, and who cannot, as yet, clearly comprehend that vote-purchasing and corrupt election practices are really unnecessary, and that by honesty and firmness the same results may be had with much less expense and trouble to themselves.

The partisan must have no advantage over the independent voter, for partisan-

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ship is not an essential element of either statesmanship or patriotism. In this direction a simple and seemingly harmless matter may work inestimable evil. The State of New York, by raising the number of signatures required for independent nominations and by compelling the independent candidates to have their names only upon separate and incomplete tickets, practically annulled many of the good effects of the law. In Pennsylvania, the percentage of voters required to make independent nominations, and the time, forty-nine days, in which they must be filed in advance of an election, are likewise prohibitive. The same result is reached in a similar way in California. Such conditions increase the evil opportunities of the machine boss, they suppress the votes and power of a large number of intelligent citizens, and destroy the vital principle of election reform. A single ballot which will assure every candidate equal rights must be demanded and maintained.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Century Magazine*, September, 1891, p. 789.

There are many influences incidental to other reforms which will make the purification of elections easier. There has been a great improvement during the last decade, and especially in the surroundings of polling places; but even now, in the undesirable localities, elections are held in places inviting only to the most depraved and criminal classes. No worthy citizen is of better clay or too fine a grain to stand a private in the ranks of our electors; but if the voting place must be uninviting to any, let it be so to the least worthy. Let it be surrounded by the principles of our national life—right, morality, and law. The most respectable location in any precinct is none too good for election purposes. In early colonial days it was common to hold elections in churches, and those edifices were then held as sacred as now. Under such circumstances there would be less electioneering, less intimidation, and less profanity, and the voter would deposit his ballot quietly and without fear. If such

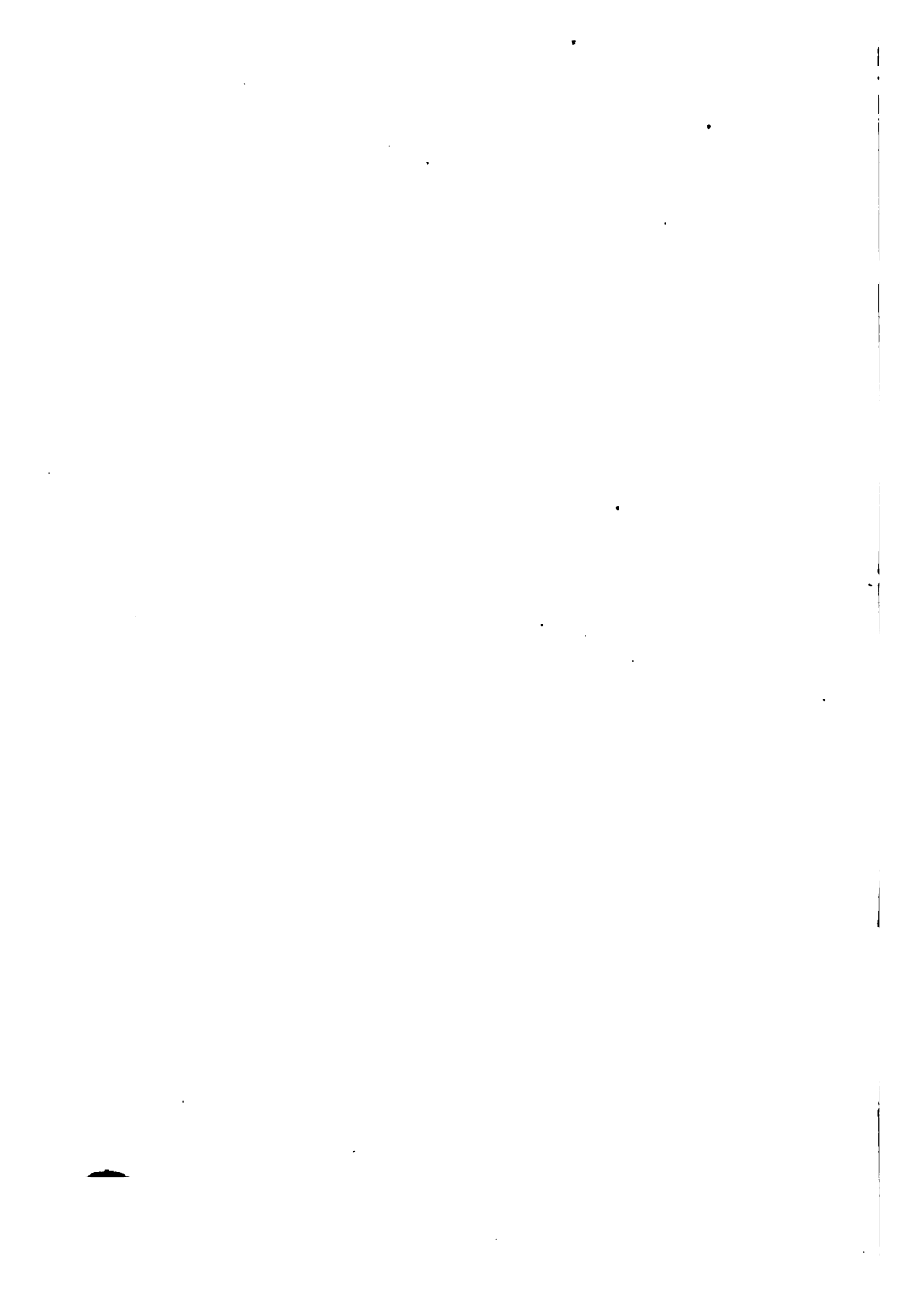
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a place would deter any one from voting, it would be those whose right to vote is the attending evil of the American idea of equality. Nor would an election desecrate those magnificent churches of to-day, whose spires reach heavenward, for next to God our country merits our love, and as citizens there is no grander or holier duty than to cast an honest and intelligent vote.

“ When God is with our righteous cause,  
His holiest places then are ours ;  
His temples are our forts and towers,  
That frown upon the tyrant foe.”

The continual exercise of the powers of the legislature, relative to municipal affairs, has resulted in the gradual assumption by the legislature, in many parts of this country, of a long series of purely local powers. It has not limited its powers of control over municipalities to those matters in which such bodies were acting as agents of the central government, but has come to regard itself as a proper organ for local as well as central government. This centralization of local functions has had a most disastrous effect upon the cities of the United States ; causing not only a great lack of local interest in the management of local affairs, but also an ignorant and inefficient management of these affairs—an unwise solution of many of the problems which have been presented to our cities.

FRANK J. GOODNOW, A. M., LL. B.



## MUNICIPAL AND STATE POLITICS.

IN every national and many a state campaign, party enthusiasm runs very high. There is a persistent effort on the part of the leaders and the press to confine the vote within party lines. The great differences and prominent issues, which are proper in their place, are forced into the affairs of cities with which they have no legitimate connection whatever. There are few questions in municipal affairs upon which good citizens should differ. All should be agreed that honesty and competency in city officers are desirable above all things, but they are usually elected because of party service, or their views upon international issues, or tariff or silver, and not unfrequently, in the larger cities, thousands of votes are given

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to candidates for city offices of known incompetence and unworthiness in trade for votes for state or national candidates. The managers of state and national campaigns find the offices of cities a very important adjunct to success. The people are secured in the web of partisanship, and the city's interests are forgotten by those who should guard them with jealous care. Its offices, emoluments, and honors are distributed by the leaders among those politicians who can and will, for rewards, perform questionable service, and control large numbers of votes in particular localities. These men are the ward politicians, and the division of the cities into wards, each having a representative in the city council, invites those evils which have brought the partisan machine into disrepute. With a lusty campaign cry and partisan lines well drawn, the local boss will secure the partisan vote of the better classes, the taxpayers, business and professional men, and mechanics, but why free silver or protective tariff should influ-



ence a man's vote in local matters—the cleaning of streets, fire and police protection, or the building of roads and bridges—is never explained. But to secure an election something more than the intelligent and respectable vote is necessary. Every large city is practically in control of the non-taxpaying element, and from this class the intemperate, vicious, and purchasable vote is mostly composed, and it is through his influence with them, and his ability to handle them, that the ward politician secures his own election, and achieves success for, and standing with, his party. He is often one of this party, which he controls, and, if not, affiliates with them, which amounts to the same thing.

He extends to them, so far as he can, the same patronage which he and his colleagues in other wards have received from higher authority. He promises the creation of new offices, clerkships in others, and jobs in parks and streets without number, and thus crowds every depart-

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ment of the public service with incompetency and unworthiness, which would never be tolerated in any private enterprise. Through all the avenues of patronage he looks forward to paying campaign obligations and of maintaining his prestige with the party. Surely the alliance of the business of cities with national politics, and its control by the party machine, is a serious evil. It opens the way for every form of dishonesty and mismanagement which avarice and ambition can suggest.

With such methods there can be no good government in cities. As a means of reform the idea of separate municipal elections is advocated by many careful students of city government. Some cities have tried separate elections with good results. It has not proven a cure for all the failures complained of, but it has brought the relative merits of candidates more prominently before the voters; by limiting the ballot to municipal officers only it is more easily comprehended; the whole thought of the people for the time

is centred upon local interests ; partisan influence is less active because there is not so much at stake, and partisan organization is less complete and less exacting, and the result is better officials.

The only objections to separate elections are "the doubtful merits of the measure," as the politicians express it, and the additional cost. Any measure that will interfere with the vocation of the politicians will be of "doubtful merits," and the experience of many cities is that the expenditure is justified.

The question as to when the city election should be held has caused some discussion. In this connection W. Harris Roome, in a paper read before the National Convention for Good City Government at Philadelphia, in advising a method approved by several cities said: "Have the elections separated by an entire year, so that the national and state elections fall in November of even years and the city elections in November of odd years. To do this it is necessary to provide

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that all terms of office of state and city officers shall be either two years or some multiple of two years. . . . If elections were separated as herein proposed, trading would be absolutely stopped and the voter would consider the municipal question undisturbed to at least a very great degree by national questions. . . . The difficulties in separating for less than a year are that party feeling will remain for some months and the opportunity for trading is not altogether done away with.”<sup>1</sup>

The terms of office in many cities are too short, and especially is this true of administrative officers. “The result of too frequent changes is to weaken the hands of the efficient officer and to secure for the city the maximum of inexperience in its government. The necessity of undergoing the fatigue and annoyance of frequent elections makes municipal office especially unattractive to the men whose

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of National Conference for Good City Government*, Philadelphia, 1894, p. 150.

*Cf. also Century Magazine*, January, 1889, pp. 472, 473.

service the city needs ; it entails unnecessary expense on the community and in every way impairs efficiency of administration.”<sup>1</sup>

There are few conditions to justify frequent elections. In the event of a bad mayor in cities where absolute power is centred in him, annual elections would be the greatest good. New York under Mayors Grant and Gilroy, and Brooklyn under Mayors Boody and Chapin have had such experiences, but even this condition might be guarded against, as in the Charter of Quincy, Massachusetts, which provides that the mayor may be removed from office by a three-fourths vote of the Council and a new election ordered.

There is in many states another strong chain binding closely state and municipal politics. It is the vicious and corrupt authority of the legislatures at every session to tinker with the city charter, and this without the consent or approval of

<sup>1</sup> Moorfield Storey, *Proceedings of National Conference for Good City Government*, Philadelphia, 1894, pp. 68, 69.

the voters, and without any official application whatever. The city has been a profitable field for politicians either as members of legislatures or as lobbyists. Its offices and emoluments have been freely used for the settlement of political debts and the advancement of partisan ends. They are constantly creating new offices, naming the officials, defining their duties, and fixing their compensation. These officers have to do with all manner of purely local affairs; their pay is not infrequently out of all proportion to the service rendered and the officers being responsible to no one approach the maximum of indifference, inefficiency, and dishonesty. Other municipal officers, in harmony with the party in favor have their term of office lengthened, their salaries increased, and their powers of appointment enlarged. Then there is the series of self-perpetuating commissions for every conceivable purpose, which fastens upon cities enormous financial burdens from which they have no power

to escape. All this is harmful not only in the mismanagement, irresponsibility and debt burdens which it imposes, but even more in the extent to which it kills all interest in local affairs. The citizen realizes how futile his efforts are, even when momentarily successful in removing an unworthy official, when at the next meeting of the legislature the same person will be installed in an office with greater opportunities for evil and no responsibility to the people who pay him and who suffer from his stupidity, avarice, or arrogance.

At the last session of the legislature in this state (Oregon), the defeat of a candidate for United States Senator was also instrumental in defeating a proposed new charter for the city of Portland.

The charter may have been either better or worse than the present one, but the people of Portland had no voice in preparing it, knew nothing of what it contained, and were correspondingly indifferent as to its fate. Its merits or defects were immaterial and is referred to only to show

to what extent the city is at the mercy of a body of men a large majority of whom are totally ignorant of its requirements, who have not the slightest conception of the numerous and complex problems relative to its government, who feel no part of its financial obligations, who cannot even understand why the pigs should not run loose in its streets or cows graze upon its vacant lots with the same freedom accorded them in their native hamlets, and who are often afflicted with a blind, unreasoning prejudice against the metropolis.

The power of the legislature to meddle in city affairs is corrupting both to the legislature and the city. The city "professionals" will be in attendance at each session of the legislature, and when the city charter is acted upon, or special acts concerning the city is passed, they will be marked by their cunning and avarice. The Hon. Seth Low tells us that "in every year of his term of office he was compelled to oppose at Albany, the seat



of the state legislature, legislation seeking to make an increase in the pay of policemen and firemen, without any reference to the financial ability of the city or the other demands upon the city for the expenditure of money. . . . New and useless offices were sought to be created and the mayor found that not the least important of his duties, as mayor, was to protect the city from unwise and adverse legislation on the part of the state.”<sup>1</sup>

The lobbyists for such legislation are the worst element of cities and the most corrupting influence in their government. On the part of the country members of the legislature, as Edwin L. Godkin says<sup>2</sup>: “Consider for a moment the effect of finding themselves in possession of such powers, on a body composed as the legislature is in the main of small traders, or farmers, or village lawyers . . . and who look on their term of service as a

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, vol. i., pp. 660, 661.

<sup>2</sup> Edwin L. Godkin, *The Problem of Municipal Government*, p. 9.

chance of fortune which may never, and rarely does, come to them again."

The same author, referring to the early history of New York City, says<sup>1</sup>: "Changes in the City Charter were made by conventions elected by the city voters, who submitted their work to the popular vote, before asking the legislature to convert it into a law. One such convention was held in 1829, another was held in 1849. They were composed of the leading men in the city and their debates were long and serious and their work treated with a reverence which we now find it difficult to understand." What a god-send such a method would be to cities experiencing the corruption and imposition resulting from legislative meddling!

The power of legislatures in matters affecting the state at large, although within the municipality, is proper, if state administrative control is not possible, but legislatures accustomed to dabble in city affairs find them exceedingly interesting,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

and they soon assume control of interests which are purely local and of which they know least. The legislature is not representative of the city in any sense ; it feels none of the responsibility of representatives and none of the burdens which result from its actions. It does not study the welfare and good government of the city, but the advancement of its own political and financial ends. It multiplies offices, fixes salaries, legislates men in and out of office, for its selfish ends and not the city's good. It fastens upon the city every form of extravagance and indebtedness which the city might never attempt if its government was in its own hands.

It has been advocated as a means of reform in cities to have the legislature limit their power of indebtedness. A more sensible plan would be to limit the powers of legislatures in imposing debts on cities for things they do not want. Through numerous commissions which it appoints for every conceivable purpose in local matters, it works inestimable harm,

dissatisfaction, and distress. Every city where legislative appointed commissions have had charge of municipal work, or managed municipal enterprises, has had the same story of extravagance and inefficiency. As stated by the Hon. Seth Low : " A state commission for any purpose other than inquiry is one of the most dangerous of bodies, for the reason that it exercises authority unchecked by any effective responsibility." And if all commissions so appointed were composed of the best men, it is still true that the legislature should have no more power to say that a city needs new public buildings, bridges, parks, lights, or water works, and therefore appoint a number of men with power to raise money, and pledge the faith and credit of the city for the same, than it should have power to say that a citizen needs a new house and appoint a commission to build it at his expense, and without consulting his convenience to pay for it, or his opinion as to the style of architecture. But the worst effect of legislative inter-

ference, in city affairs, is in its deadening influence upon civic pride and energy. The citizens who would be interested in local government, and whose business experience would contribute largely to the solution of many difficult problems of city life, are now disgusted and hold municipal politics in contempt, because they realize how futile would be their efforts so long as there is no self-government or autonomy possible in city affairs.

The power of the legislature is in many instances almost absolute. Except in the ownership of property, the city has no private rights such as the constitution guarantees to the individual or private corporations. The courts have held that in the public character of cities they are agencies of the government, created for, and invested with, certain limited powers which the state may enlarge, abridge, or destroy, that they are subject to legislation, and that their charters are grants of privileges which may be altered or amended. It is this unlimited power of the

legislature extended to strictly local interests which has greatly destroyed local self-government.<sup>1</sup>

As stated by the Committee on the Government of Cities in the State of New York in 1891<sup>2</sup>: "These are the conditions which if applied to business of any other corporation would make the maintenance of a continued policy and a successful administration as impossible as they are to-day in the government of our municipalities, and produce waste and mismanagement such as is now the distinguishing feature of municipal business, as compared with that of private corporations."

In many states the legislature has been prevented by constitutional provisions from incorporating cities by special acts or interfering directly in purely local matters, but these provisions have often been nullified by the enactment of laws,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Goodnow, *Municipal Home Rule*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of New York Senate Committee on Cities*, 1891, vol. v.

general in form but applying only to a certain city.

There is no measure for municipal reform so difficult of attainment and so much to be desired as the establishment of home rule for cities and the proper limitation of state authority over matters of general government intrusted to them. All methods successful in effecting other municipal reforms are almost useless in this. Neither separate elections, good officials, or citizen organizations can assist much. It requires diligent study by the best legal talent in the country to determine and distinguish those public and governmental functions of the municipality within the purview of state control, and a sphere of municipal action in which greater powers of local government may be granted and in which the city may move with freedom.

A general act in all states for the incorporation of cities with constitutional provisions against the enactment of special acts is the first step. It will then be

necessary to delegate the power of general government wherein the state has authority to responsible administrative officers. For instance, a state board of finance to determine what should be the limit of indebtedness which all cities within the state might incur, might consist of the Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. When deemed necessary to incur any bonded indebtedness a city could apply to this Board through its mayor and council, formally stating the amount of indebtedness and the purpose for which the same would be incurred. The state board, if it deemed advisable, might grant the authority, and the proposition could then be submitted to the people at a special election, where only taxpayers should vote. To this method there is the objection that great public work which necessitates the increase of debt must benefit some particular locality more than others, and it would be opposed by the more remote taxpayers. Also the ultimate advantages of great public works are seldom appreci-



ated at their beginning by the people generally. Only those who have given the subject careful study realize the far-reaching influence of a large public enterprise. But either this method or a percentage on the assessed valuation of the city, which is also open to many objections, would be a wonderful improvement over the legislative control. Boards for other purposes, such as education, police, sanitation, etc., might be organized in the same way. Again, the laws that are adequate now may not be ten years hence, and while preventing the legislature from meddling in purely local affairs ample powers must rest with the legislature to provide for the contingencies of the future.

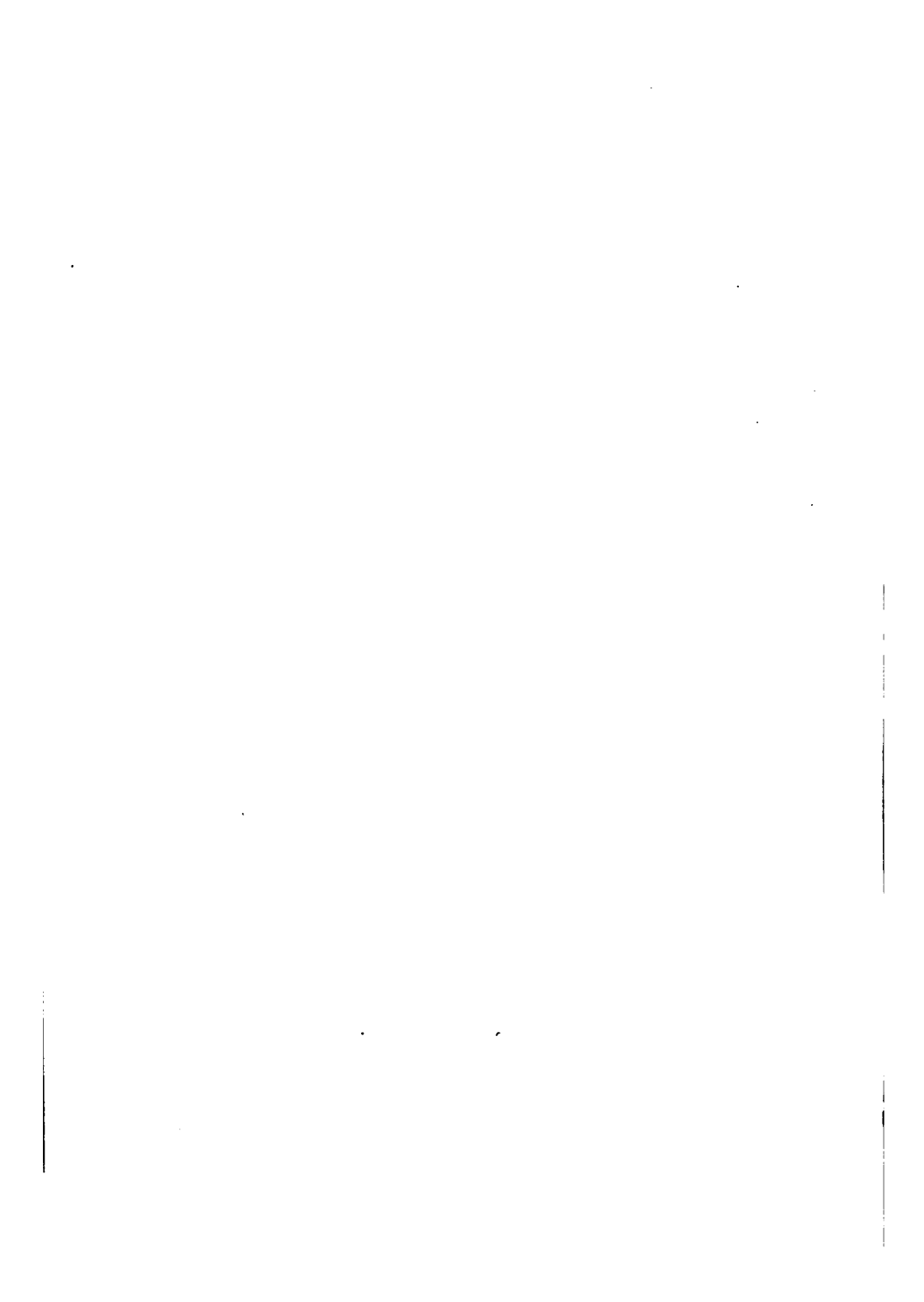
The question is a large one and of exceeding interest. We have but intimated the numerous problems to be solved. For the few it offers a field for deliberate, painstaking, and profitable study. In the meantime a simpler lesson may be taught to the great masses who are less interested.

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It is that they may vote for honesty and ability in municipal affairs without reference to tariff or silver and yet remain true to their political party. There is no element of good city government which affects party allegiance or which can prevent a voter from supporting a strictly partisan ticket in other elections.

It is the duty of every citizen to do his share in eliminating not only the spoils system, but the spoils idea, from politics ; to press upon the authorities the necessity of continually extending the merit system, and of acting according to its spirit outside of the classified service. For it is no exaggeration to say that the evils of the spoils system are illustrated in every sinister career in the history of modern American politics ; every disgraceful " success " is to be laid at its doors ; every corrupt ring has here its origin. It is the menace and enemy of honest administration in every community in the country ; it degrades our legislatures, state and national ; and the cause of good government triumphs only when this pernicious system is thwarted or overcome.

*Century Magazine*, May, 1893, p. 149.



## CIVIL-SERVICE REFORM IN CITIES.

THERE is no specific remedy for all the failures in municipal government in the United States. In fact, the possibilities of many reforms are not fully known because, with our loose ways of city government, they are never given a fair trial, but civil-service reform rules, where intelligently enforced, have resulted satisfactorily. The advantages of thorough civil-service reform show more clearly in its application than almost any other proposed reform for cities. It is a reform easily attained, permanent, and important.

It is useless to hope for economy or efficiency in city government until civil-service reform principles are applied to all its departments. As it is now, for every place in the public service where

there is a man needed as common laborer or skilled expert, each councilman has a friend, and all the influence he can command is brought to bear in securing the place for his friend. The salaries of the heads of administration officers are often fixed by the council, and in this way councilmen have a special power. The character or fitness of the applicants is never considered. If they can "put in time" and draw salaries, little more is required. Such men cannot be dismissed, by the person to whom they should be responsible, for such would offend the persons whose influence secured their appointment. Edward W. Bemis, writing in *Public Opinion*, says: "A recent chief of the Chicago Sanitary Department assured the writer, that there were not six of his hundred subordinates whom he could trust. It was useless to dismiss any one, for the chief must take in his place whomsoever some alderman may desire." Not infrequently new offices with chiefs and many deputies are created for no real

purpose other than the positions they offer. The pay is often out of all reason for the service rendered, but it is expecting too much of human nature to hope for any change while the system which makes it possible prevails. To cut off the salaries or positions of one's friends who labored during the long siege of an election campaign, requires a degree of courage and ingratitude not attainable by the average councilman. It is no wonder that the average citizen, who reviews the body of public servants under such conditions in our large cities, and realizes their mediocrity and their pay, concludes that the public offers in many instances a premium for every element of inefficiency. This is not true of all public employés in any city, for there are men of ability and character in every city serving the public faithfully, but it is, in a measure, true of all cities where the spoils system is tolerated.

The distribution of patronage is the most harmful influence in developing the

worst forms of misgovernment. It is the politicians' power, and through it they muster, drill, and control an army of voters. It is an army which only the spasmodic effort of a long-suffering and indignant public ever defeats at the polls; an army powerful in organization, for it is an army of regulars always drilled and when overpowered quietly awaits an opportunity to retrench itself within the public service. The Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, referring to bad service as the great difference in the expense of municipal government here and in Europe, said<sup>1</sup>: "The standard of work has fallen too low and the standard of payment has arisen too high. In such a case apathy and carelessness would soon lead to general inefficiency and incompetence. Places without work would be multiplied to give opportunities for patronage; and we may be sure that whenever four men are chosen to do a task which one can easily perform, the work will be badly as well as expen-

<sup>1</sup> *The Forum*, November, 1892.



sively done, since there can be no proper sense of responsibility under such conditions. Ignorance would be permitted to review the work of idleness, and dishonesty, even if it did not take the form of actual theft, would be rife in the shape of neglect of duty and inadequate service." This spoils system has been so prevalent in all departments of our government that we fail to realize that, aside from its baneful results, it is a national crime. The Hon. Theodore Roosevelt says<sup>1</sup>: "Where we allow the offices to form part of an immense bribery chest, the effect upon political life is precisely the same as if we should allow the open expenditure of immense sums of money in bribing the voters."

It is unnecessary here to enter into the detail of civil-service reform methods as applied to cities. Those who desire to give the subject special study will be assisted by the laws in effect in Boston, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Chicago. To show the influence and effect of the merit

<sup>1</sup> In *Public Opinion*, April 4, 1895.

system in civil service honestly and intelligently conceived and faithfully enforced is the purpose of this paper. The Hon. Carl Schurz says<sup>1</sup>: "The object is not merely to discover by means of examinations among a number of candidates for public employment the most competent, but to relieve the public service as well as our whole political life as much as possible of the demoralizing influence of political favoritism and mercenary motive, and thus lift them to a higher plane not only intellectually, but morally. Its improving effect upon the practical efficiency of the service will indeed be considerable. It obliges the candidate for appointment to stand solely upon his merit and therefore to prepare himself for a good showing. It makes the public servant thus appointed feel that his retention in office will depend not upon the favor of any influential individual, but only upon his own zeal and competency in discharging his duties. It

<sup>1</sup> Pamphlet, *The Relation of Civil-Service Reform to Municipal Reform*, published by the National Municipal League.

tells the aspirant to promotion that his ambition will be gratified only if he furnishes proof of superior capacity, knowledge, and practical work. All this will inspire public servants with a self-respecting purpose to do their utmost, not to please a political patron, but to give to the public the best of that kind of service for which they were appointed."

Every student of municipal government recognizes the benefits of the merit system in civil service where applied to cities. The sentiment of the people favors it, but it threatens the greatest stronghold of the politicians. "The party boss is robbed of his most formidable weapon when he is no longer able to reward his henchmen from the public treasury by the gift of office."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore opposed by the silent but organized forces which defeat the will of the people in almost every legislative assembly.

While it is true that we cannot copy European methods, as stated in a pre-

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Welch in *The Forum*, April, 1894.

vious article, we may profit by their experiences and in nothing more than in the effects of public service based on merit only in cities as at present enforced, especially in Berlin. Francis G. Peabody, in comparing municipal service in the United States with service in the cities of Germany, says<sup>1</sup>: "With us municipal offices are the spoils of successful politicians; in Germany they are the prizes of experts. It seems to a German as incredible to hear of a city governed by men who are just pausing on their way to some higher place as it would to hear of a railroad or of a cotton mill thus superintended. Good city administration with us is an accident. . . . In Germany, city work is a science, as far from politics, as is the science of engineering or architecture. Each salaried alderman is responsible for a single department, or for several closely allied parts of the public business. . . . He is elected to his office because of his knowledge and

<sup>1</sup> In *The Forum*, March, 1892.

skill in a special field of municipal work, and takes charge of that department. Thus city work offers to a young German a life career, just as railroading or manufacturing does in America. An educated man makes a special study of water works, or building laws, or poor relief. . . . He serves his time in the administration of some small town, and perhaps, gets a place at the head of his chosen department in some small city, and tries to make that department a model of efficiency and economy ; finally, he finds the end of his professional ambition in being promoted to the same work in one of the great cities of the Kingdom. Here he has a place of dignity in the social world and, if successful, holds a life office, with the assurance of a pension for himself and his family. Neither politics, nor even residence affects a city government in its selection of such a man. It is not of the slightest importance that these administrative offices be filled by residents of the town. On the contrary, just as a great railroad

in America looks over the whole country for the best general manager, or engineer, and tempts him by a large salary to leave the smaller road, where he has done good work, so a large city in Germany looks the country over for the best administered town or the best conducted department, and bids for the best man to do its work." The German system of city government is not wholly perfect and certainly not desirable amid our democratic institutions, but the system for civil service as there enforced is good common sense, it is endorsed by the American people, and is in no way inimicable to the principles of our government. On the other hand, it is strikingly American and the whole spoils system is decidedly un-American. As shown by Henry Cabot Lodge, the patronage system has been brought from the Old World. He says<sup>1</sup>: "After the fall of the feudal system and the rise, establishment, and consolidation of the monarchies of Europe, the doctrine that

<sup>1</sup>In *Century Magazine*, October, 1890, pp. 839, 840.

the king was the fountain of honor received a great extension. It was perceived readily that as the king possessed the appointing power he had a vast opportunity in the public service and in the public revenue for reward and punishment, for corruption and profit. In offices and sinecures, in pensions and contracts, the king could provide for his bastards and his favorites, his relations and his supporters. In the monarchies of Europe this was what patronage in offices meant, and it was dispensed with a profligacy which sowed seeds of revolution destined to bear a terrible harvest. . . . With a limited suffrage, rotten boroughs, and an aristocratic government it was a most powerful engine, and the personal and political corruption which it engendered is one of the commonplaces of history. . . . It is a system born of despotisms and aristocracies, and it is the merest cant to call it American. It is a system of favoritism and nepotism, of political influence and personal intrigue. In a word

it is as un-American as anything could well be, for a system by which Louis XIV. and his successors drained the life blood of the French people, and by which Sir Robert Walpole and his successors corrupted the British Parliament, has no proper place on American soil, and is utterly abhorrent to the ideas upon which the democratic government of the United States has been founded and built up."

To demand that American cities in all those departments of work where technical learning and skill are necessary should have as efficient service as the great corporations is reasonable, but it is also necessary that the city shall guarantee permanent positions, promotions to the worthy, and good pay. If it is expected that men will learn how to do the business of cities and become experts in its various departments, as men excel in other professions, the city must offer as permanent, honorable, and profitable a career as do railroads or mercantile houses. As it is, "Every young man of first-rate intelli-



gence shuns political life and public service, and seeks for his occupation in other directions; while the men of inferior intelligence, unstable character, and flabby morality turn to politics as offering them a better chance of success than they could hope for in the severer competition of private occupations.”<sup>1</sup>

There are always plenty and to spare, willing to do city work; many who will do it for little pay, but they are not the kind of men cities need. American cities have suffered far more from ignorance, inefficiency, and indifference than from good pay.

Experience teaches that in all occupations men become proficient as they continuously devote their time and thought to a particular work. A policeman who has served five years should certainly be a more valuable officer than one who has only served five months, and the same is true in every branch of labor. In all positions where technical skill and professional training are necessary, competi-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, October, 1891, p. 954.

tive examinations should be held and promotion should be assured the successful applicants as opportunity offered. For all common labor, applicants should register with approved recommendations, and positions should be furnished them in the order of their registration, with the assurance that they would be continuously employed so long as required and they rendered the same service as would be demanded of them in any private enterprise. Under such a system what a difference there would be in the public service! Free from the bondage which the spoils system entails, the service would be more inviting to men such as are needed, they would be self-reliant and self-respecting and would command the esteem which is now generally withheld from the working forces in public offices. What a relief too it would be to the officials! True, many present incumbents might not be re-elected if deprived of their patronage, but for those who would administer the affairs of cities it

would remove the most disagreeable and unsatisfactory work and make room for the more serious consideration of the complex and onerous duties which modern municipal government assigns to its officials. All who have watched the workings of the spoils system have seen important matters delayed and public duty neglected while the officials whom the people trusted were wrangling over the appointment of some minor officer of little or no concern.

It must be admitted that the results of civil-service laws, in all cases where it is said they were tried, have not been all that was anticipated, but it is not civil-service reform well understood and properly enforced that has failed. The fault is in some instances in the persistent efforts of those who have profited by the distribution of patronage to defeat the law, otherwise in their success when the law was enacted in making it a blind which could be used to increase the evils it proposed to remove.

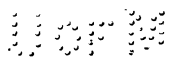


The idea that the merit system in civil-service creates a privileged class should have no more force than to argue that the professions are privileged classes. The difficulties and embarrassments of civil-service reform in the departments of national government are not to be encountered in cities. In Washington the service is incomparably better than under the spoils system, but it is also sadly true that long tenure in minor offices there, is accompanied by an emasculation of character, a complete loss of patriotism, and a lack of husbandry that is appalling, but none of those dangers threaten the enforcement of civil service in cities. In Washington the minor official is too far removed from the people and perhaps equally far from critical supervision, but in the city he is in touch with the people, his service would be daily subject to inspection, and his promotion would depend upon his proficiency, character, and patriotism.

The interest that every good citizen and especially every man of moderate means

should feel in the abolition of the iniquitous spoils system, cannot be more explicitly stated than in a letter sent out by "The National Civil-Service Reform League." It says<sup>1</sup>: "By the reform of the Civil Service it is meant that every competent citizen of the United States shall have an equal chance to enter the service, and that it shall no longer be kept for the support of the party politicians ; that in order to enter the service a man must show that he is competent ; that when he has entered the service he shall be kept there as long as he faithfully and efficiently performs the duties of his office, and not be compelled to give up his position because it is wanted for a party hack or the henchman of a boss. . . . A poor man has a personal interest in the abolition of the spoils system, because he is not incompetent in consequence of being poor, and he has a right to a chance for appointment if he wishes it ; because, if not

<sup>1</sup> The National Civil-Service Reform League, Hon. Carl Schurz, President, No. 54 William St., New York.



competent himself, his son or daughter, educated in the public school, may readily become so ; because the spoils system wastes the public money, and the poor man pays his full share of taxes in house rent and food and clothing, and everything that he uses ; because it is the interest of every citizen that the business of the government shall be honestly managed ; because the policeman who is trying to feather his own nest is always the worst enemy of the citizen, while pretending to be his friend, and the abolition of the spoils system means the destruction of the boss, whose power rests on the distribution of offices as spoils ; because no other reform is safe or can even be successfully prosecuted until the abolition of the spoils system has been secured."

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE CITIES.**

	Population.	Fiscal Year.	Net Indebtedness.	Per Capita Indebtedness.	Annual Interest Payment.	Annual Expenditure.	Per Capita Cost of Education.	Per Capita Annual Expenditure.
London.....	4,221,452	1800-01	\$225,000,000	\$53.29	\$10,801,675	\$54,601,065	\$1.48	\$12.93
Glasgow.....	782,728	1803-04	30,600,770	38.61	1,321,825	9,046,000	1.62	11.54
Birmingham.....	420,006	1802-03	38,146,440	88.78	1,331,125	7,033,023	1.45	16.36
Manchester.....	595,343	1802-93	73,022,885	122.88	2,311,060	11,000,000	1.87	21.00
Paris.....	2,500,000	1804	370,000,000	148.00	20,000,000	66,600,000	2.10	26.06
Berlin.....	1,570,244	1802-93	68,275,000	43.23	2,450,000	20,015,050	2.16	18.31
New York.....	1,515,301	1804	101,428,481	66.92	4,880,382	37,362,065	3.04	24.65
Chicago.....	1,438,010	1804	17,722,950	12.32	857,421	32,020,184	4.24	22.26
San Francisco.....	208,007	1803-94	260,871†	1.27	70,680	4,812,353‡	3.39	16.00
Boston.....	404,205	1805	37,131,423	75.13	2,443,716	22,000,543	5.00	44.71
Omaha.....	140,452	1804	5,172,500	37.54	244,264	1,301,458	3.25	9.26
Portland, Oregon.....	81,000	1805	4,863,460	60.04	248,538	892,303§	3.68	11.01

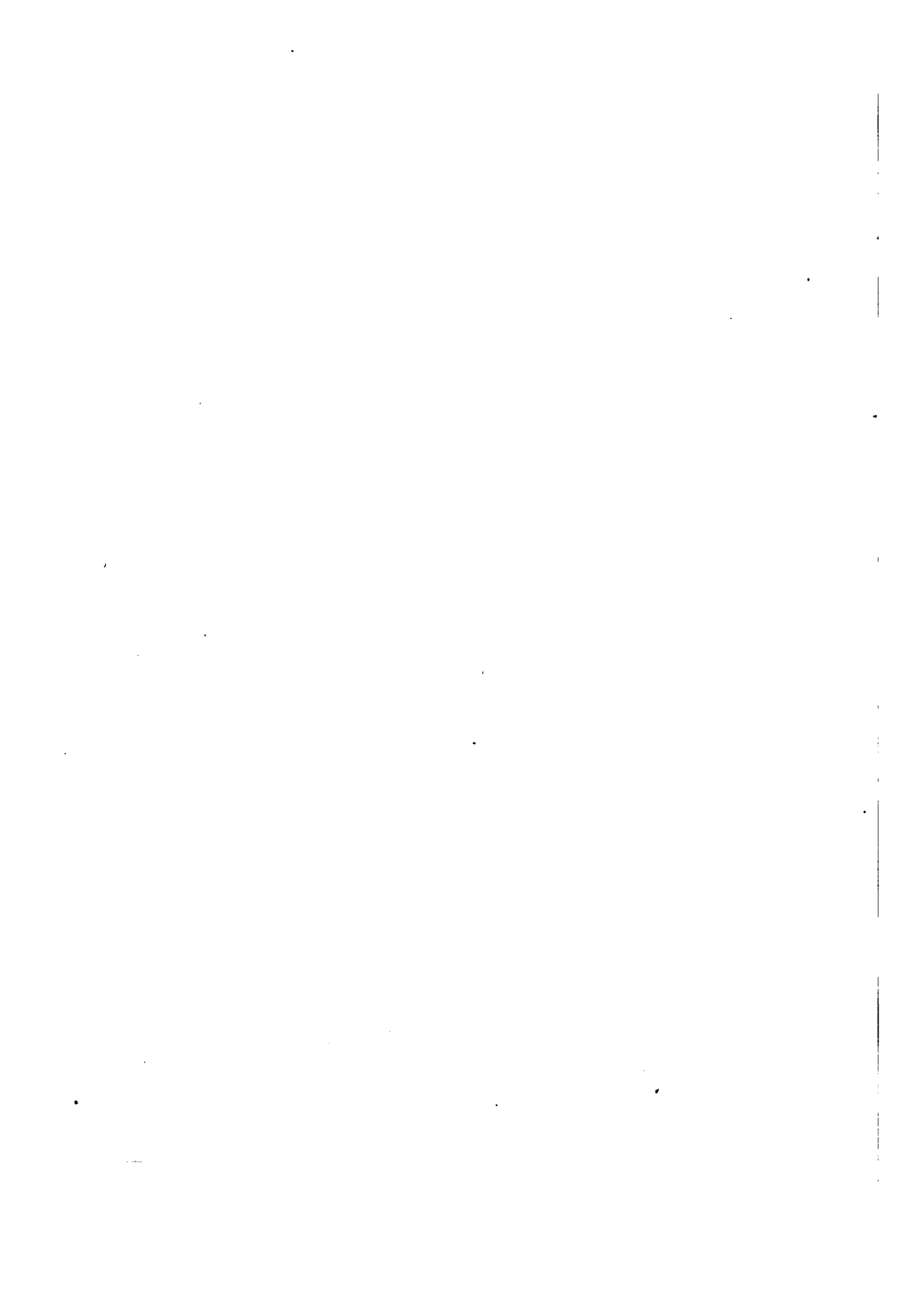
\* Not obtainable from financial statements received.

† San Francisco has a special debt to be paid by lands benefited of \$2,415,000, and which is not considered an obligation of the city.

‡ Includes \$112,752 paid for redemption of bonds and \$174,185 paid on outstanding obligations of previous years above the total of all demands audited.

§ Does not include expenditures by Commissions.

NOTE.—If the above table proves interesting, it is certainly not valuable in determining the cities economically governed. The advantages afforded by large expenditures must be considered. A city may show a very low annual expenditure after having completed all necessary improvements for which a large indebtedness was incurred. On the other hand, large expenditure may represent a rapid amortization of debt, or permanent improvements, which are being paid for when made; or, as it more frequently happens, the disbursement of funds created from the sale of bonds for such improvements. The annual expenditure of a city does not determine the cost of its government. To know how economically a city is governed, we must know what it gets in return for its money.





## COST OF CITY GOVERNMENT.

THERE is no subject touching municipal government in this country so much discussed as that of economy, and it may also be said that no other subject has been so little studied. Our people feel the burdens of direct taxation. Their demands for economy in many ways are justified and doubtless intensified by hard times, but more often they are unwarranted ; and it may be shown that many who cry loudest are most inconsistent.

It is true that during the last decade a large number of people were engaged in speculation, and vast sums of money were drawn from legitimate business for such purpose ; “booms” were frequent, the people unstable and excited, real estate values far beyond what reason would dictate, and towns were built, and building

and paving done beyond all needs of the near future. Cities suffered from many needless expenditures, resulting from neglect of government and the feverish haste which demanded certain results. The same was true in private enterprises, but now, after the depression and when capital is returning, however slowly, to its legitimate channels and the people are engaging more earnestly in productive work, there is a clear view. The wrecks of the "boom" are on every hand, but shrewd business men recognize the cities of large possibilities and continuous growth that will be the centres of manufacture and commerce. It is the government of such cities that concerns us. In such cities there is constant demand for improvements. The expenditure is large, because future requirements are considered. It would be a foolish waste only to provide for the present. An engineer in approaching a heavy grade throws fuel into the furnace without a thought of expense. He knows the strength of his engine, the

weight of his train, and is neither reckless nor timid. The people of a city should know its possibilities, and exercise prudence, zeal, and judicious economy in meeting the requirements of growth.

It may have been noticed that in reform efforts in the United States the cry for economy has been accompanied with a pressing demand for all those improvements that make Paris, Berlin, and Birmingham so attractive. Americans want, not what any one of those cities has accomplished, but the best all have done, and without increase of expenditure.

We want the best service from the most capable men, but with our rudimentary ideas of public finances, we are objecting to paying a fair remuneration. It is the decree of fate that whatever is desirable will cost. We cannot expect good things for nothing. The great public institutions of a modern city must necessarily cost large sums of money. And now to show the inconsistency of those who are demanding good city government and all the

improvements and conveniences it implies and less expenditure, I desire to present for comparison a brief statement of municipal expenditure in European cities, to which we are referred for models. The cost of improvements as a whole is approximately the same in all European cities, and a review of the expenditures of one or two will give a fair idea of what they have been in others.

“Paris is the typical modern city.” It was the pioneer city in reconstruction and improvement that would meet modern requirements. It set an example for Glasgow, Birmingham, Berlin, and Vienna. In all the details of public building, sanitation, paving, in establishing an order of beauty, cleanliness, convenience, and safety that makes modern collectivism possible without impairing the physical and mental growth of the people, Paris has been first. This is because the French people through their refined and artistic tastes quickly adopt modern instrumentalities; because the French capital is a centre of great

learning and has doubtless more men of superior technical learning devoted to the study of city building than all the United States. With them it is a science. And yet by an examination of the table preceding this article it will be seen that Paris costs more than any other city in the world. Its municipal debt is enormous and its financiers who have studied as diligently as its architects and engineers, have exhausted every means of taxation. Upon almost every article of fuel, food, and building material brought into Paris, taxes are paid to the municipal government of the city.<sup>1</sup> But Paris is the fashionable city of the world; it is the Mecca to which the ambitious all travel, to which the rich of all nations pay tribute and may not be taken as an example for cities dependent upon commercial interests.

For efficient service, economy, and stable improvements Birmingham is distinguished. In 1873 it had a population

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Article in *Century Magazine*, July, 1891, by Albert Shaw.

about the same as San Francisco at present and its bonded debt was a little more than \$2,000,000, while of San Francisco it is only \$260,871. During 1873 the Hon. Joseph Chamberlain was elected mayor and his ambition and ability inaugurated the plans which have marked Birmingham as the most progressive city in the world. The first move was the purchase of the gas-works from different companies at a cost of \$10,000,000. This investment, although very large for such a population, has been profitable from the very beginning, and not only furnishes gas to the consumers for fifty cents per thousand feet, but returns a net annual income to the city of \$325,000. The same year the water-works were purchased at a cost of \$6,750,000, and the same being insufficient demanded a large additional outlay. There is no profit resulting from the ownership of the water-works. The next step was the purchase of all the property within a certain district of about ninety acres where the

streets were narrow and filthy, the crowded tenement houses poorly constructed, and the whole unsightly and unhealthy. This necessitated an expenditure of \$8,000,000. The whole district was platted anew ; the streets widened and paved ; old tenements removed ; the land where suitable for business leased for seventy-five years and the residence part built up with cottages and rented. The result at first was a very heavy tax and at present the income is \$100,000 per annum less than the expenditure, but after a time it will pay and when the seventy-five years' leases expire the city will be very rich. These vast expenditures were further increased by the cost of a system of sewers, the construction of street railways, the establishment of public baths and laundries, the providing of public libraries and art galleries and numerous other desirable possessions until the municipal debt reached the enormous sum of \$47,000,000, and now the city is proceeding with a new water supply which will cost when finished an additional

\$35,000,000.<sup>1</sup> These extraordinary expenditures represent the cost of a model city. It does not seem that any of these improvements have been exceedingly cheap, but if the vast sums of money have been honestly and wisely expended and the citizens of Birmingham have made no accusations of rascality or extravagance, they are certainly eminently worthy of the truly great men who have managed so great a trust. And it will be remembered that the form of government in the cities of Great Britain is of the type that has been the most pronounced failure in America. As Gamaliel Bradford says<sup>2</sup> of English Municipal Government: "It must make the mouth of a Tammany Chief water to think of such a simplification of his labors and increase of the opportunities for plunder." It would be interesting to know how many of those

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, chap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Gamaliel Bradford, "Our Failures in Municipal Government," Publication No. 88 of *American Academy of Political and Social Science*, p. 27.



agitators for economy in the United States and who are continuously referring to Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, and other cities as examples worthy of emulation, would advocate our cities engaging in such daring enterprises which promise so little immediate income as did those of Birmingham at the time they were begun.

No one can wish to detract from "the most complete and satisfactory governments" of European cities, and yet in justice to our subject we may be pardoned for referring to a few details in which some American cities may be compared without disadvantage.

Education is the pride of democracy, and many American cities are proud of a public school system that is not surpassed in the world. The city of Boston, for example, has given this subject special attention and libraries and art galleries, its free schools for day and night where almost every branch of learning is taught, and where all who wish may fit themselves for any profession or trade, its free

lectures and numerous other institutions of learning form a system of education as much to be admired as are the well-paved streets, or government gas-works of Europe.

There are also many American cities with excellent drainage and where almost all closets are connected with sewers and flushed by water. The excellence of this method is unquestioned. Only a small proportion of the closets of Birmingham or Manchester are so connected. The former city has 45,000 and the latter 70,000 pan closets which are removed once a week. This system, it is said, meets with a high degree of approbation. I believe few Americans would be content with such a system or regard it perfect. The drainage and health departments of Birmingham represent a large expenditure of money, and the death rate has been reduced from 27 to 20 for each one thousand. The city of Chicago has never boasted of its cleanliness nor of any wonderful system of sanitation, but its

death rate is only 15.24 for each one thousand. The street-car service in Europe is cheaper but not so good as in American cities, and the American traveller must often miss the powerful electric lights, as in America at almost every intersection of streets, even to remote and wild-cat additions, which make our streets brighter and more interesting by night than by day. This reference might seem irrelevant to the subject of expenditures in cities were it not important to show that the average American city has accomplished some things and that its taxes are not wholly misappropriated. We all know that in many ways we have been both wasteful and extravagant, but as the Hon. Seth Low says<sup>1</sup>: "The marvel would seem to be, not so much that the American cities are justly criticisable for many defects, but rather that results so great have been achieved in so short a time."

<sup>1</sup> Hon. Seth Low in Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, vol. i., p. 652.

The fact is that the great improvements of a model city cost large sums of money either in Europe or America. Nathan Matthews, Jr., ex-Mayor of Boston, stated the matter briefly in his valedictory address. He said:<sup>1</sup> "The city cannot operate its water-works and ferries at less than cost ; it cannot maintain a school system more elaborate than any to be found elsewhere ; it cannot provide every suburban village within the municipal limits with school-houses, fire-engine houses, and police stations ; it cannot build streets and sewers for the benefit of speculative land-owners ;—it cannot do all these things, or any of them, without an inordinate annual expenditure and a corresponding heavy tax rate. The real difficulty to contend with is the demand of individuals, interests, classes, sections, and sometimes of the whole community for extravagant expenditures ; and this difficulty is constantly increasing as the belief gains ground that the com-

<sup>1</sup> Reported in *Municipality and County*, July, 1895.

munity in its corporate capacity owes a liberal living to its individual members. A gradual change has come over the spirit of the people ; and a large part of the population once the most independent and self-reliant in the world is now clamoring for support, as individuals or in classes, from the governments of this country,—federal, state, and city.”

The American people have caught the infection of paternalism which is prevalent throughout the world and which is pressing upon government, where it can, affairs far beyond its legitimate functions. It is in direct conflict with all ethical, moral and economic laws, and threatens the material and political prosperity of the American people.

Reduced taxes has been the cry in many campaigns, and there is a good deal of rivalry between political parties in their efforts to effect the same by reducing public expenditures. Most campaign workers as well as most legislators are given no well-defined economic course to pursue

and so they work at random. They never investigate or know the various channels through which public moneys are expended and therefore do not know where expenditures may be judiciously reduced. There is one way, however, always open to attack and that is the salaries of officials, and in many cities they have been reduced until there is no inducement in office for men of superior business ability and integrity of character. There is a perpetual demand for good men and a perpetual cry against paying them what their service is worth. Good men cost money. Desirable men are always able to do well. When they accept a public office they must sacrifice their own business. It is a peculiar feature that in the model cities of Europe, salaried officials are paid well. The Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain says:<sup>1</sup> "It is right that a wealthy municipality should act toward all its employés with a liberality as great as that practiced by the

<sup>1</sup> Rt.-Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, in *The Forum*, November, 1892.

most generous of private employers." And this the average American city does not do. If we insist upon having the most competent men we must respect them and pay them. As Moorfield Storey says<sup>1</sup>: "To fill the higher offices in a city government requires a great deal of time and hard work and we cannot organize our government upon the theory that a considerable number of the most capable citizens will sacrifice themselves for the benefit of the rest. In the long run we must pay for good work if we expect to get it. We cannot compete with private employers unless we are willing to pay as much. The work of governing a city is not especially agreeable, and the city can well afford to pay for the best talent that can be had. Large salaries are not so expensive as large stealings and poor work. . . . The sound business rule is to pay good wages for good work and to expect nothing for nothing."

<sup>1</sup> Moorfield Storey, in *New England Magazine*, June, 1892.

There can be a great reduction made in the expenditures for salaries in cities, but it must be done intelligently. There are some salaries, mostly fixed by legislatures, which are too high and should be reduced, but no considerable saving is possible in this way. The greatest and at the same time the most judicious economy will be effected by abolishing numerous offices, which are sinecures created for political favorites and which serve no purpose of government, and by removing from the public service in every department all who hold places through political friendships or as rewards for political service, and by replacing them by competent men to whom a position will be a reward for superior ability. In this way one man will do the work and do it well where three are employed and do it indifferently. The number of employés will, in this way, be reduced to the actual requirements of the service ; they should be paid well, and only first-class work should be expected or tolerated. Any other reduction in the



way of salaries will result in less honest and less competent men, and every good business man knows that the item of salaries is small compared with the losses resulting from dishonest, careless, and incompetent employés.

It is not our purpose to advocate large public expenditures or defend a high rate of taxation for municipal purposes. We merely hold that there is a vast difference between extravagant and judicious expenditure. The requirements of a rapidly growing city must necessarily cost large sums of money. It is economy to limit many improvements to the actual requirements of the near future. In others it is the greatest economy to anticipate approximately the ultimate requirements of a city. There is just as much danger of extravagant expenditure in doing too little as there is in doing too much.

Nor do we advocate high salaries, certainly not higher than liberal private employers pay for service such as cities require. To pay more is to offer a pre-

mium for public service, and to pay less is to put up with service less efficient. Faithful and efficient work, fair pay, a reasonable assurance of permanent positions and exemption from "election assessments" should be the rule of cities.

There is another item of expenditure in European cities which is advocated by some reformers with us. It is the pensioning of antiquated officials. It is the same old cancer of government paternalism with its emaciating influences. It is in striking contrast with the early American idea of personal liberty and independent individuality. It has a withering effect upon all those sturdy virtues of a strong and self-reliant character. The public service is not more dangerous than other fields of employment. A man who receives fair wages until no longer fit for service and does not save something for his old age, would not do so in any other occupation, and is certainly not the best servant for the public.

The average American city is a good

deal in debt. Building great cities as we have done in a few years from nothing, out of the wilderness we may say, the public credit has been freely used, while at the same time we have been wasteful and improvident of the sources of income to which our municipalities are entitled. If European cities teach us one lesson of greater importance than another it is how to preserve to the city resources other than direct taxation. Their great advantage in being able to make many improvements which are excessively burdensome in American cities is not so much the result of economy of expenditure as in well-devised and carefully managed revenues. We are in the habit of taxing property until it is no longer profitable to hold it, while we give away means of revenue which should defray a large share of the cost of government. We grant a franchise for gas-works, electric lights, water mains, street railways, telegraph, or telephones, without a dollar remuneration, and at the same time obligate the city for

innumerable expenses in the way of repairs to streets, etc., during a long period of years. A company to which such a franchise is granted will construct a plant for say one million dollars, and by selling its product to the city, to which it owes the possibility of success, at a large profit as well as charging what rates it pleases to individual consumers, it grows rich rapidly, waters its capital stock, and is often paying fair dividends upon fifty times the amount of its original investment. Such enterprises are detrimental to a city, a hardship upon the community, and are demoralizing in their ultimate influence upon the principles of legitimate business.

Now let us consider how those affairs are managed abroad. These are great concerns which directly interest the entire public, and being by their nature each a monopoly in itself, they cannot be regulated by competition. They can be controlled and made serviceable only by the law which creates them. The gas-works

of Paris are owned by one company, and their charter was renewed in 1870 for a period of 40 years. Albert Shaw says<sup>1</sup>: "The financial aspects of this charter can be briefly summed up. The company must furnish gas to individuals at a price not exceeding a fixed maximum. It must supply gas for public uses at what is practically the cost of manufacture. It must pay to the city 200,000 (ultimately 250,000) francs a year for the right to pipe the streets. It must pay a tax of .02 francs on each cubic meter of gas supplied to Paris. Finally it must not 'water' its stock, but must keep its capitalization at 84,000,000 francs, and after paying 13½ per cent. out of net profits as dividends to the shareholders it must divide the surplus profits with the city. Finally, at the expiration of the charter, all rights revert to the city, which becomes also the owner of all the subways, piping, etc., that pertain to the plant. The city's share in the profits has steadily increased until the receipts

<sup>1</sup> *Century Magazine*, July, 1891, p. 458.

from the gas company have become a large item of revenue. . . . For several years past the annual payment of the gas company to the city has been approximately 20,000,000 francs." The city inspects the gas manufacture, tests the quality, supervises the fittings in all buildings, and the management of public lighting. Paris not only obtains public light at cost but receives \$5,000,000 per year for privileges. The total annual income to the city from this and similar enterprises amounts to about \$10,000,000. Its management of the electric system now being introduced is equally advantageous.

The first street railway in Glasgow was opened for service in 1872. The lines were constructed by the city and leased to a company for twenty-two years. "By its terms the company was required to pay to the corporation (1) the annual interest charge on the full amount of the city's investment, (2) a yearly sum for a sinking fund large enough to clear the entire cost of the lines at the expiration

of the lease, (3) a renewal fund of 4 per cent. per annum on the cost of the lines, out of which they were to be kept in proper condition and restored to the city in perfect order and entirely as good as new in 1894, and (4) a yearly rental of \$750 per street mile. Such were the money conditions of the lease; and certainly the city's interests were well looked after. But meanwhile the interests of the public as passengers were equally well secured. First, it was provided that in no case should the charges exceed a penny per mile. . . . Also that morning and evening cars should be run for working men at half price."<sup>1</sup> The same authority further states that the company (Americans) who took this lease sold it for a premium of \$750,000. The investment by the city was about \$1,700,000, and after the sinking fund reached \$1,000,000 a compromise was effected and the city remitted the annual rental and sinking

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Shaw, *Municipal Government in Great Britain*, chapter iv.

fund charges. Upon expiration of the lease in 1894 very favorable terms were offered the city for a renewal, but an agreement could not be reached and the city has assumed control of the lines. And it is worth while to remember here that comparatively the street-car traffic is not so great in any country as in America. This is due, first, to the dense population of European cities. Paris with a population of 2,500,000 covers only thirty square miles, and secondly to the fact that Americans take advantage of these modern conveniences quicker and think less of the cost than other people. As Hon. Seth Low says<sup>1</sup>: "It is mournful to reflect upon the opportunities for relieving the tax levy which have been lost to all our cities through the system of parting permanently with public franchises. It may be too late to remedy the evil as to franchises already granted, but it is not too late to change at once the policy of our cities for the future."

<sup>1</sup> In *Century Magazine*, September, 1891, p. 734.



As to the revenue producing enterprises in which cities may engage, there seems to be no good reasons why cities acting as local and *quasi* private corporations should not hold rental property, light and water works, street-car lines, etc., but it must be understood that the maintaining and operating of these enterprises, while of great public benefit, are purely business enterprises and not strictly within the domain of government. Glasgow, Manchester, and Birmingham operate gas-works and furnish gas for sixty cents per thousand feet and realize a very good profit. These cities also own and operate street-cars at a profit, and charge only two cents per mile. There is a danger, and especially at this time, in the owning and operating of these monopolistic enterprises. It is possible that the municipal corporation, in seeking the public good as much as profit, by employing a large number of men of various trades, may fix the standard of wages which competitive business organized for profit only could

not stand. On the other hand, we know too well the evil of uncontrolled private monopolies. As Mr. Bryce says<sup>1</sup>: "The plan of leaving the function to private corporate companies is open to evils scarcely less patent than those which flow from dishonest management, because these companies when they prosper and grow large, bring their wealth to bear upon municipal authorities, and have even been known to scatter bribes widely among the voters for the sake of retaining or extending their monopoly."

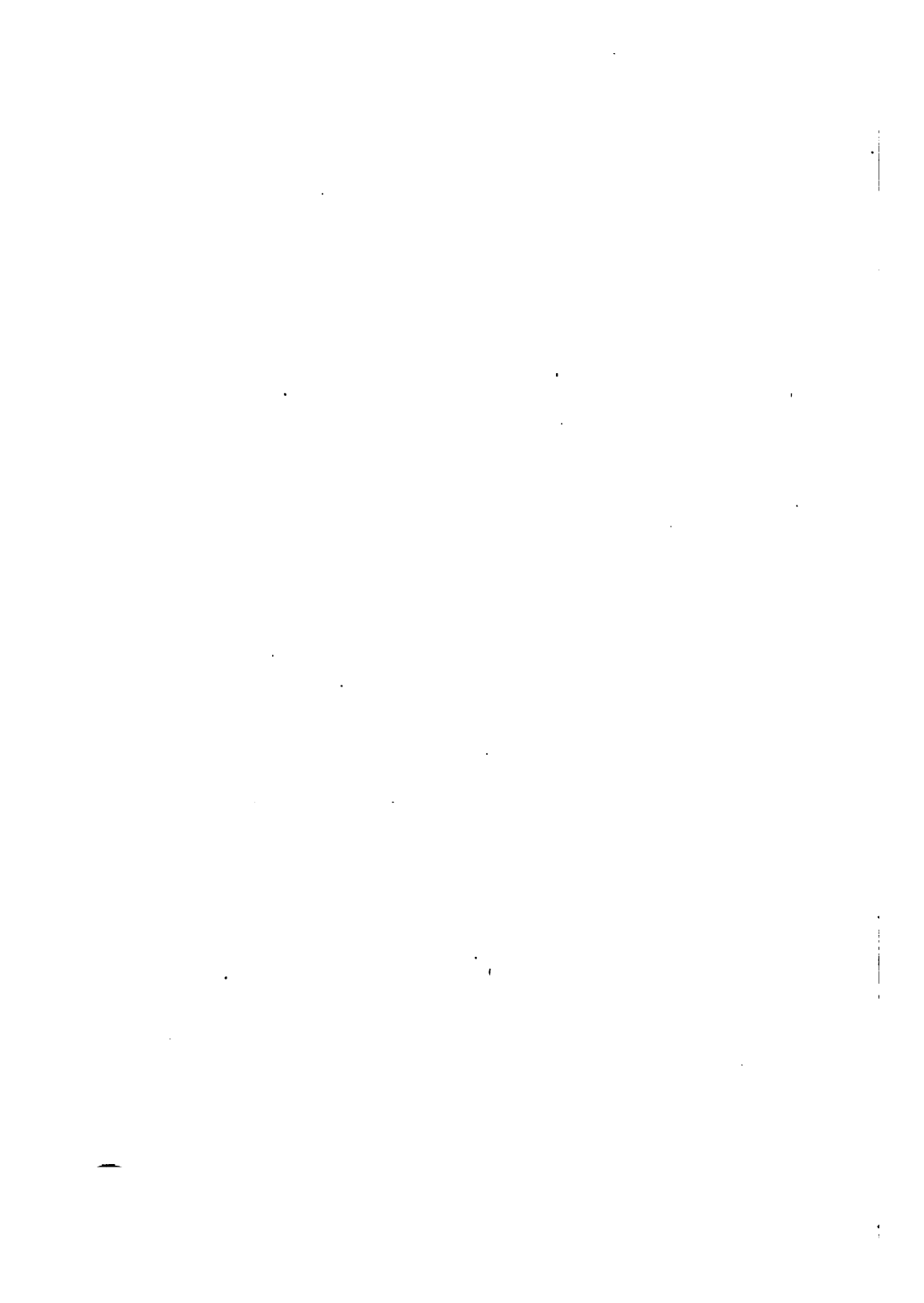
In this country, while there is such general dissatisfaction with the management of municipal affairs, and so little respect for or confidence in public officials, it would not be well to extend the field of municipal patronage and expenditure. A safer, although perhaps a less profitable, method would be to properly tax and control these corporations, and provide for their acquirement by cities as the privileges would expire, when they could be

<sup>1</sup> Bryce, *American Commonwealth*, vol. i., p. 648.

leased or operated as then deemed advisable.

A very considerable item of revenue in European cities is from rented property. Of all sources of revenue this is the most easily acquired, especially in Western cities, and the most easily managed, for it enters into competition with no established industries ; it requires no large number of employés ; the necessary expenditures are light, and leaves the city free from the entanglements of labor and wage problems.

By a little thought and diligence it may be found possible to increase the revenues of our cities, multiply their advantages, and at the same time reduce the burden of taxation.



Limit in every way the powers of city officials to do evil,  
and you limit their powers to do good ; intrust to the city no  
great interest, and the citizens will have no great interest in  
the city.

WILLIAM SCUDAMORE.



## OFFICERS,—THEIR POWERS AND DUTIES.

IN the discussion of reforms in city government, the powers, duties, and responsibilities of officials have received much attention. The people like to know what powers the officials have ; in what capacity they are represented by them ; and what service they are expected to perform.

It has been so difficult to fix the responsibility for misgovernment where it belongs, that political reformers in nearly all instances are in favor of centralizing all power in the mayor, authorizing him to appoint whom he pleases to nearly all positions within the city, and also making him answerable for every evidence of inefficiency, extravagance, or dishonesty. The old theory that in the council of many there is wisdom, is being discarded. The movement towards centralization of power is conspicuous for two reasons ; first : It

is anti-democratic and contrary to the American idea of government. It is clearly a misconception of the position and its duties. American institutions, national, state, and municipal, are founded on principles and not on men. Whenever American cities are solely dependent upon the personality of one man for efficient and honest government it will be time to confess that our form of government has failed. A government by the people implies the education of the people to understand and consider measures. In monarchies, where the king is everything, his personality is all-sufficient, but not so in republics. Nations have made no great achievements through the personalities of individuals when there were no broad, practical ideas back of them. The people of this country are often disappointed in officials, because they vote for men and not for principles that burn deep in their own hearts. As John A. Butler said<sup>1</sup>: "The only movements which touch

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings National Conference for Good City Government*, Philadelphia, p. 226.



the people permanently and profoundly are those which command unqualified respect and present ideas and principles dear to men's sympathies and conscience." The mayor of a city should be elected as its chief executive, to enforce the laws as he finds them, without discretion and regardless of his personal opinions. Second: It is in striking contrast to the governments of the principal cities of Europe, and especially of Great Britain, which are daily referred to for the great progress they have made in meeting modern requirements, and for the wisdom, efficiency, and economy of their governments. In all those cities the municipal Czar is unknown and the government is almost wholly with councils said to be able, faithful, and conscientious men.

In some of the principal American cities this idea of centralization has been tried with varying results. In New York and Brooklyn, with exceptionally good men as mayors, fairly good government was had, but with weak and unworthy mayors the

government through and through was bad beyond description. It will also be noticed that with a bad mayor and poor government there is no remedy until the term of office expires, and this there is a constant tendency to lengthen. If the mayor is to govern as he pleases there should be some method for his removal from office when of known incapacity. To threaten him with defeat at the next election is not sufficient, nor is there reason in bearing with so great a wrong as a bad mayor with absolute power during the long term for which he is elected.

It is impossible always to elect good mayors for the reason that all good men do not make good mayors. Many good men are eminently, successful in their respective callings, but would fail utterly as the chief executives of large cities.

The centralization of power in the mayors of cities has been fostered with us by the prevalent idea that members of city councils are wholly incapable of anything except "working their positions for

all there is in them." It seems a more reasonable course would be, not to exercise less care in the election of a mayor, but more in the election of councilmen, and among a number of equally good men divide the labor of city government without obscuring a direct responsibility for any department. It seems that it would be obvious, to any who will consider the numerous and widely differing interests which a city represents, that one person cannot efficiently direct the whole. The autocrat mayor, although he may be the wisest and best of men (which he will not always be), will make many mistakes. We are aware, as Mr. Frank J. Goodnow says,<sup>1</sup> that "It is regarded by most municipal reformers as quite unorthodox to doubt the final efficacy for good government of this particular form of municipal government." Yet we cannot but believe the ultimate results will be disappointing, and that our people in seeking relief through this anti-republican principle

<sup>1</sup> Goodnow, *Municipal Home Rule*, p. 5.

“have been pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of good city government, through paths which have led us pretty close to the point from which we started.”<sup>1</sup>

There are certain officers of a city who require special ability and experience, and who should heartily co-operate with the mayor in protecting the lives and property of the people, maintaining peace and enforcing the laws, and those officers should be appointed by the mayor. He should have power to appoint the fire commissioners and police commissioners, who should answer to him for the efficiency and economy of these departments, but the officers of these respective departments should not be removable without positive proof of inefficiency or neglect of duty, for the excellence of each depends upon continuous service with assurance of promotion, as occasion permits, for faithful service. He should also appoint municipal court judges, and in no department of his work should he exercise greater care.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

There is no department of municipal government so much in need of reform. It is here that the poor, ignorant, and especially the foreigner, receives his first impressions of justice, and it is here that at present he develops a most sincere contempt for our institutions, instead of being impressed with feelings of respect for our courts and our officials and educated to a just appreciation of good government and good citizenship. If the mayor appoints those officers, and in addition shall exercise a general supervision over city affairs, study its interests, keep a watchful eye over the expenditures of the various departments, inform himself of the laws and how they are enforced, and so far as possible secure efficiency and judicious economy, he will be given an ample field for the greatest wisdom and energy.

There are other officers, such as health officers and engineers, requiring professional knowledge, and others, such as a commissioner of taxes and assessments, who should be removed beyond the influ-

ence of classes, and whose election by the people does not as a rule accomplish the best results. I believe the appointment of these officers may safely be intrusted to a council of men worthy of their positions. There are also various other branches of city government which demand close attention, such as the cleaning of streets, the care of parks, the relief of the poor, etc., which can best be supervised by committees of a council, each member of whom should be a peer of the mayor and worthy of equal confidence. It is, of course, understood that the supervision of these departments conveys no patronage, but that all clerkships and labor shall be provided by well administered civil-service reform rules.

The very best men in any city are none too good for councilmen. The office is worthy of more respect, confidence, and ability than is usually given it. It needs to be made honorable by dignified and able men. It seems impossible that this shall be done before ward boundaries are

wiped out and the councilmen elected at large. The cities will then be free from one of the worst influences, and better men will be elected. As Hon. Seth Low says<sup>1</sup>: "It is found in American cities that the larger the constituency to which a candidate must appeal and the more important the office, the more of a man the candidate must be." As it is now the boodling, vote buying, hobo-colonizing ward politician is too often the councilman, *de jure* or *de facto*, and for every expenditure of money within his ward, whether right or wrong, which he secures, he receives the praise of those he represents, and feels that with each looting of the public treasury for local interests he is doing a great and important work for which he was chosen. Moreover, it is sometimes true, as Mr. Bryce observed, that "city councils are not only incapable administrators but are prone to such public improvements as present opportunities

<sup>1</sup> In Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, vol. i, p. 664.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527.

for speculation, for jobbery, and even for wholesale embezzlement."

I cannot concur with a very general opinion, which is given expression by Mr. S. E. Moffett, in the theoretical application of his plans to the government of New York. He says :<sup>1</sup> "Of course there would always be a number of bad men in the council. There are certain districts in New York which could be fairly represented only by thieves and ruffians, and these would naturally elect thieves and ruffians to act for them. . . . The council in the end would perfectly reflect the moral condition of its constituents. So long as the mass of the people remains sound that is all we need." Councils should more than reflect the moral and intellectual standing of a city. As Edward Kelly said :<sup>2</sup> "If our municipal governments were, as is sometimes contended, truly representative of majorities, our task, though still not to be abandoned, would assuredly be one of

<sup>1</sup> Moffett, *Suggestions on Government*, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings National Conference for Good City Government*, Philadelphia, p. 103.



almost hopeless magnitude. It would mean that we had a work of education to do which in some cities, like New York, with a perpetual accession to it of a large foreign vote, would probably never be accomplished." The sections of a community where vice reigns should have no representation. Such sections are to be governed and not to govern. Self-government was never intended for such communities, and their representatives are largely responsible for the disreputable character of city councils. The gambling, thieving, and white-chapel section of a city demands the attention of the wisest and most conservative men, and such men do not want to be associates of thieves and ruffians.

It may seem in place here to advocate proportional representation, initiative referendum, etc., and the orthodox reformer might do so. Proportional representation presents a beautiful picture in the distance. It may be a good thing in Switzerland, but the fact remains that we are Americans.

Its advocates represent more of the theoretical and speculative class than of practical men whose callings demand tact, prudence, and discrimination. Our representative assemblies perhaps do not always represent majorities, but when elected by large districts, as members of congress, they do represent majorities of the sturdy and reliable citizens who justify what is good in present institutions by favorable results, and who make progress possible by the adaptation of the best of what is to the rude conditions that are. Proportional representation would split our political parties into many factions. There would be the saloon element, the gambler element, the church element, greatly subdivided, the socialist element, etc., and each would possibly have its representative, and representative bodies would be a mass of bigotry, prejudice and fanaticism, and bickerings, strife and failure would be their history.

It is certainly quite evident that there are numerous factions, like certain locali-

ties in cities, which do not deserve and should not have representation. It is very probable that by proportional representation, like representation by guilds, the class who read least and know least of the problems of government would have the largest representation.

By electing able and worthy men to the city councils, they will gradually acquire the dignity given like bodies in other countries. The duties and responsibilities of councilmen should be commensurate with the standard of business and executive talent which we would have them possess. It cannot be expected that men of the desired ability will be willing to sit like logger-heads in council without power or influence, while a mayor, autocratic and independent, is wagging along the immense burden of the city's interests, many of which must be sacrificed.

The whole business of a city should be in the hands of the mayor, council, and other administrative officers. All moneys of the municipality should be in the hands

of the treasurer. And all claims, for whatever purpose, should be examined by the City's Auditor. There should be no commissions for any purpose. The whole history of municipal commissions wherever they have existed, if not of absolute dishonesty, has been of such reckless extravagance as to amount to the same thing. The constitutions of some states forbid the creation of municipal commissions, and to those who have noted their workings it must seem a wise provision.

In 1876, Samuel J. Tilden, then Governor of New York, appointed a commission to draft a bill providing for a greater degree of self-government for cities. Among many recommendations of this commission was a Board of Finance, consisting of tax-payers and elected by a vote of tax-payers only. This board was to control the whole subject of finances, but the property qualification defeated it in the Legislature. The measure had a good deal of merit. Since that time nearly the same result has been accom-

plished through what is known as the Board of Apportionment, consisting of the mayor and the heads of certain departments, and who have absolute control over all receipts and disbursements. It is certain that the principal administrative officers of a city are generally of good standing; through them the moneys of the city are received and disbursed; they study in detail the workings of their respective departments, and with the mayor and a committee from the council, acting as a Board of Finance, should render valuable assistance in numerous matters of which it is next to impossible that the council as a whole will acquire any definite knowledge.

There is little difficulty in defining the duties of administrative officers. They should be chosen from those callings which qualify them for the offices they are to hold within the municipality. The efficiency of their respective departments will depend upon their knowledge of the work required, their daily supervision of

what is done, and the experience, ability, and diligence of their assistants. It is as important that an Auditor should be an accountant of known ability as it is that the City Attorney should be a lawyer, or the Superintendent of Works, a civil engineer. It is also impossible for the best qualified official to conduct his department satisfactorily to himself and to the public with a force of assistants who have no experience and who receive their positions as rewards for campaign services. For the conscientious and capable official there is no greater help than well managed reform in civil service, where positions and promotions depend only upon faithful and competent service.

However, there is room for greater efficiency and economy in nearly all administrative offices. The economy may not always result in a direct saving by the reduction of expenses in those departments, but it will be apparent in the expenditures of the people. Among these possible reforms may be enumer-

ated an improved and uniform system of keeping records, especially of ownership of property, mortgages, taxes, liens, etc.; a system of assessment and taxation that would be uniform throughout the state. The necessity of the latter is plain from the fact that the assessed valuation of Chicago in 1874 was \$303,705,140, and in 1894 was \$247,425,140, or in the fact that in Omaha, Nebraska, with a population of 104,452, the total assessed valuation of property is \$19,926,780, while Portland, Oregon, with a population of only 81,000, the assessed valuation is \$47,000,000. Another reform of great importance to cities would be a simple and uniform method of keeping municipal accounts. Each city now has its own system, which frequently changes with each officer. Such reforms all result in economy of labor within the departments and in far greater economy and convenience to the public. Uniform methods in these departments are conducive to greater efficiency for the reason

that men in remote parts of the state may take up the subjects intelligently, and, by study, gradually attain the proficiency needful for the most technical work in the metropolis.

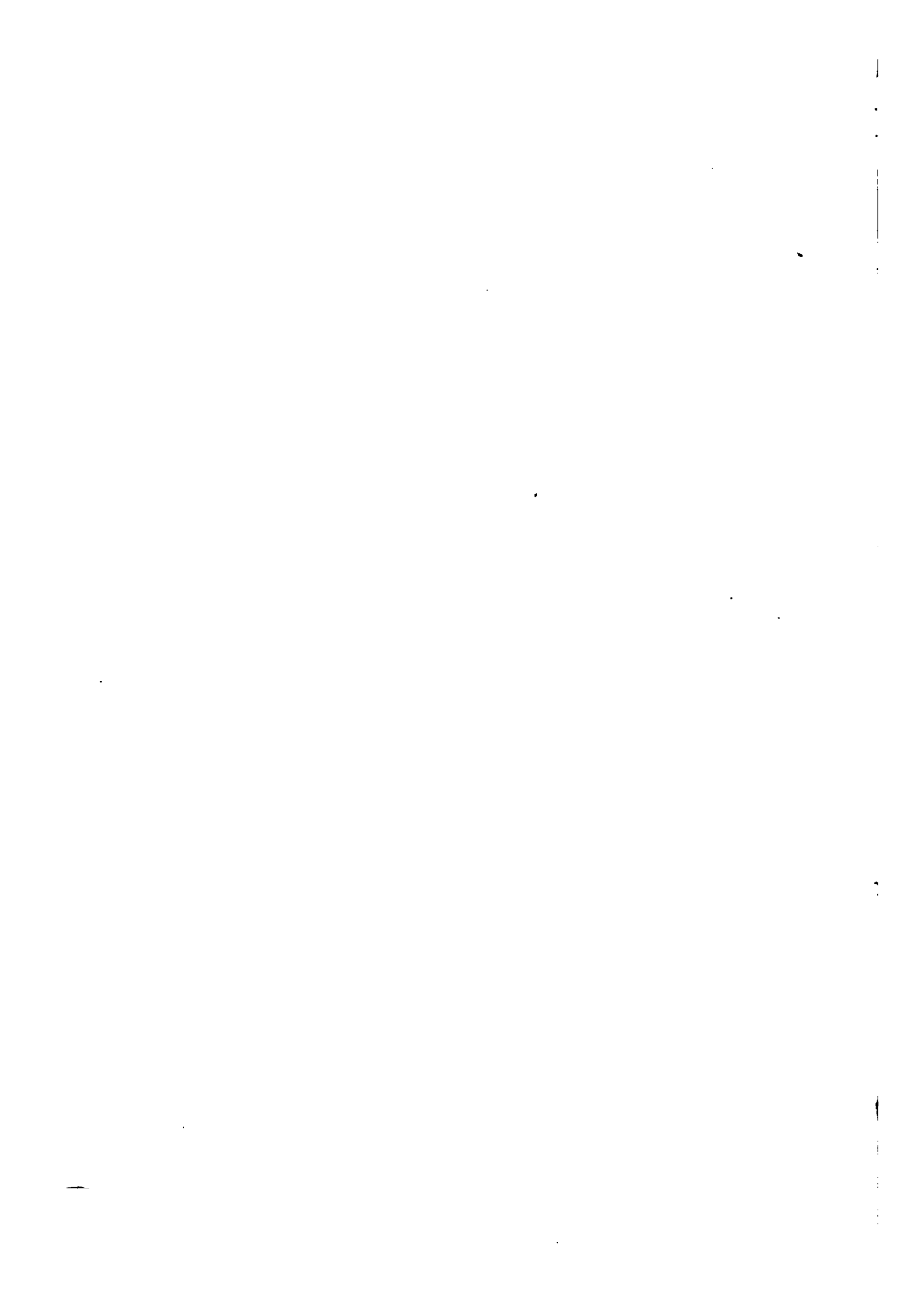


The practical politician firmly believes that the sole measure of a man's fitness for an office is the ability to get it. Competency, education, experience, honesty, are merely "platform" words—strong but of no real significance. In fact, the less ability the candidate has for a place, the more ability he displays in securing it.

Politics so often deal with ignoble things—things of the earth, "earthy"; things of the pocket, of the sewer, of the gutter; with disagreeable people, disagreeable places. Patient labor, self-denial, sacrifice are needed. Comfort, pleasure, luxuries, necessities must be given up to insure success. Rebuffs, insults, calumny, ridicule, defeat and disaster, must be met and overcome. This is the environment, these the factors, which confront the earnest, patriotic man.

And the people themselves must regard public service more justly, if not more charitably, than they seem to do at present. The outlook is encouraging; a better, nobler, more patriotic spirit is abroad in the country; men are finding that they must not censure, but act—that they themselves are largely responsible for what they condemn, and upon the whole, I believe, we are approaching a new and better era of "practical politics."

F. T. GREENHALGE.



## THE OFFICIAL, THE PRESS, AND THE PEOPLE.

### THE OFFICIAL.

THE office-holder is very often a politician in the general acceptation of that term. The science of politics to him means a knowledge of the devices by which voters may be influenced and the passions and prejudices of men turned to the advantage of his party and himself. The broad field of politics proper where right, morality, and honor on the part of individuals and the nation take precedence of personal profit or partisan success, and where politics mean the consideration by able, earnest, and patriotic men of those principles of government which will best insure safety, peace, and prosperity, is to the politician in office an undiscovered realm.

He is however a "good fellow"; suave, pleasant, and companionable. He does little work and trusts largely to his assistants. He entertains pleasantly with the small talk and pleasing gossip of the cheap politician. His strong point is his knowledge of humanity. He treats the public with whom he comes in contact with all the agreeableness he can command. This is one of his secrets of success, for the American people care more for deference and attention on the part of their officers than for painstaking application to work. The politician in local office is there for two excellent reasons to himself: First—no other occupation would be so congenial to him. He likes the excitement of elections, the enthusiasm of success, the entertainment which the theme of politics affords, and the consciousness of wisdom which he gradually acquires from a knowledge of the "inside" of local politics. Second—his pecuniary success is greater than it would be in any other calling. He is wanting in the qualities of

close application necessary to success in business or professional life. If he fails of election he is not cast down, for he again finds a political berth and his pull with his party helps him into it.

But the professional politician will not always do. It sometimes becomes necessary to add strength and respectability to a ticket. The party managers consider available candidates and often decide upon some well-known business man; one who is prosperous, contented, and has numerous friends. He is patriotic and takes an interest in the prosperity of the city he is in, attends local political gatherings, and if he is possessed of pleasing address, may at times have expressed his views or tendered his advice in public meetings. The whole current of his life is pure, and truly no word can be said against him. He is approached on the subject, and, while pleased with the attention, positively refuses to accept a nomination. Other friends talk to him, his candidacy is noised abroad, the newspapers

refer to him flatteringly, and being mortal he finally permits his name to go before the convention. His first subscription is a good round sum for campaign purposes, and then begins the series of claims upon his finances, which only the public official can know and which ends long years after he has retired to private life, weary, disgusted, discontented, and poor. He is elected to an office for which he has had no special training, and the work is unlike anything he has ever done. He had not thought of the ability required for the place, perhaps he was told it was a sinecure, but he finds a multiplicity of duties and great responsibilities. It may be he finds fairly competent assistants employed by his predecessor; fortunate for him if he may retain them, but the chances are that the promises made during the campaign and the imperative demands of the "party" will compel him to replace them at once with "workers" who never work and who have no idea of the duties required of them. Then for each place there are an

hundred applicants, and the ninety-nines for whom it was impossible to find places are, with their friends, his bitter enemies, and denounce him with all the vituperation they can command. After months of labor and worry he gets the business of his office in fair running order, but every mistake he has made has been marked against him as an evidence of premeditated rascality. Finally he is ousted from office. He is poorer in purse ; his business, at which he was prosperous, is ruined ; he is mentally and physically unable to build it up anew ; his friends have no sympathy for him, and he is afflicted with a most serious derangement—a craving for office.

The former are types of officials, but they are extremes. The average officeholder is not the most intellectual man in the community ; not always the best qualified for the position he holds, but we are not paying for the best talent or seeking entirely for such. The salary of the average official is small as compared with the income of the best business and pro-

professional men of the community, and moreover public office, with all the fault-finding and abuse which are heaped upon it, is not inviting to such men. But the average local official is far above the average citizen in intelligence, integrity of character, and a conscientious regard for public duty. He is hampered by conditions over which he has no control. He is seldom satisfied with his own work because he understands the difficulties in his way which the public do not know or care about. The better elements of society have no word of commendation for his earnest and faithful efforts to promote the public welfare, but unlimited censure for every imaginary error. The elements of society who profit by bad government tempt him with every inducement and are eager to praise the slightest action on his part that may result in their favor. If the administration of a local official is not actually bad, it results from strong personal character on the part of the official, rather than from any good influence from the public he



serves. Perhaps no word of approval or credit for good work on the part of an official should be expected, for he is paid for such, but there is too much vituperation and abuse for error. There are a great many more honest than dishonest officials. Bad government is more often the result of inexperience and inefficiency than of downright rascality. As Hon. Alva Adams says :<sup>1</sup> " Most of the waste and misrule of our cities is due to poor business ability, to incompetency rather than dishonesty. The majority of men are honest, the majority of city officials are honest, but many are so incompetent that they cannot grasp and comprehend their duties : their incapacity makes them helpless victims and tools of the shrewd scheming trickster." It is not a charitable or just view of the question which Mr. S. E. Moffett takes where he says :<sup>2</sup> " The plan of electing good men to office

<sup>1</sup> Hon. Alva Adams, Address before the Monday-Evening Club, Pueblo, Colorado.

<sup>2</sup> Moffett, *Suggestions on Government*, p. 92.

is followed at almost every election, and the only result is to turn good men into bad. The most substantial and respected citizens in the community turn rascals when they become supervisors. The concentration of temptation is too much for them." Honest men will be honest at all times and under all circumstances, but the effects of inexperience or inability and dishonesty upon the community at large may be almost the same, but for this the people are more to blame than the official.

There is some dishonesty and wilful wrong-doing in official life, but it results from the same selfishness and greed for money-getting that prevails in this country. As St. Clair McKelway says:<sup>1</sup> "It concurs with piracy in business, with sordid social standards, with the gambling which is called stock-selling, with slum journalism, with erotic literature, with licentious drama, and with the surrender of the pulpit in unfortunately too many cases to plutocracy in the pews." It can hardly

<sup>1</sup> In *New York Independent*, September, 1894.

be expected that we can have absolute honesty in public office so long as a spirit of deception, aggravated by general cupidity, prevails and while every business firm, trade, profession, and calling is in constant conspiracy against the public.<sup>1</sup>

THE PRESS.

There is something strangely inconsistent in the attitude of the American press in politics. It poses as an unbiased critic, with sufficient intellectual and moral elevation to permit a clear perspective. It proclaims itself a fearless advocate of truth, and professes to approve what is good and condemn what is evil in the management of our institutions. It claims to be all it should be and which it is not. The press represents interests far greater and more diversified than are frequently known. It should be inquisitorial, critical, and just. It knows or should know that it may commend as well as condemn. Its duty, like that of the official, is clear, but, like

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lunt, *Economic Science*, p. 67.

the duty of the erring official, is lost sight of in the business of money-getting. In politics the press is influenced by the same motives of greed, selfishness, and ambition which distinguish the most undesirable politician, but it is less honest and less scrupulous.

From the day a man is nominated for office until the night of election, the press of his party is crowded with fulsome praise of his ability and worth, all of which is well paid for. From the day he assumes the duties of office until the next nominating convention convenes, unless the official becomes the tool of the press, it generally pursues a course of criticism founded in its own selfish interests and addressed to the prejudices of its readers. It seeks, by all the subtle means which its position affords, to advance its own interests.

It is not claimed that officials are never at fault, or that the press is wholly at fault. There are bad officials as well as scandal-mongering journalists. There are

officials of small minds who once in public position are arrogant, selfish, and indifferent, and there are journalists who, finding a single evil, or perhaps an official who cannot be purchased by flattery or terrified by abuse, forthwith condemn not only the official but the party. There are also officials who have a mistaken idea that they are doing their own private business when they are in the public service, and they might avoid much adverse criticism by an easy manner and a willingness to give to the public, through the press, information to which it is entitled.

The press has succeeded in suppressing whatever deference the people ever entertained toward officials, and at the same time has fostered a most sincere contempt for its own political utterances. This is deplorable. It is not a good schooling in citizenship and especially for our foreign elements, and our politics need the educational influence which an honest and patriotic press could exert. Desirable men for office will be difficult to find so long as it is

true, as Gamaliel Bradford says:<sup>1</sup> "A sneer at politicians is the best a man can hope for who achieves any success by devoting himself to the public good." The waning influence of the press in local politics is evident from the election returns of many cities and the admissions of many able journals. It is quite certain that, with the reading class of voters, the influence of the press in local politics, if any, is negative.

The unwarranted and unwholesome criticism of officials is one of the serious evils of municipal government in this country. *The Kansas City Times* in May, 1893, presented some plain statements on this subject. Among other things it said: "The most abusive and persistent criticism of municipal officers proceeds from the same bad qualities which the critics allege against the political influences behind the government. 'Unscrupulous as to ends and violent as to means,' the critics take

<sup>1</sup> Gamaliel Bradford, *Our Failures in Municipal Government*, p. 32.

the cheap pretence of an ideal standard and viciously assail officials for not performing miracles, when the real object is to harry officials into conducting government for the interests represented by the critics. This sort of thing is as common as the weaknesses of municipal government so mournfully portrayed in political literature. Honest, disinterested, and intelligent criticism is just as rare as able, honest and efficient government. . . . Unjust and unbridled criticism tends to produce corrupt government. The poison of dishonest detraction is as deadly to municipal reform as the disease of self-seeking in office. Before there is a complete reform of municipal government in America, there must be a reform in the tone of criticism. The reform will come, as all reforms do, from progress in public education. The public will gradually learn to weigh the motives of criticism, while public judgment upon the methods of administration is being ground sharp by observation and experience. Neither cor-

rupt criticism nor corrupt administration will fool the people when the people understand. Public servants will be protected from slander at the same time that public business is protected from the schemes of unworthy servants."

THE PEOPLE.

Rev. Washington Gladden says: "The most formidable evils engendered by bad government are those which attack the character of the citizens, which undermine their patriotism, their honesty, and their virtue."<sup>1</sup> We have endeavored to show some of the evils of American city government, not forgetting the difficulties it has encountered, the measure of its success, and the improvements possible. The most serious evil to overcome is an indifference on the part of the general public. No laws however good can be substituted for good citizenship, and it is plain that the people are much to blame

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of National Conference for Good City Government*, Philadelphia, 1894, p. 165.



for the worst features of our city government, and will be so long as our problem remains, "the efforts of a great prosperous, and Christian community to protect its religion and morality and property from ruin at the hands of a government of its own choice."<sup>1</sup> Whenever a community earnestly insists upon having its government administered on principles of right, morality, and economy, it will be successful. Police protection will be withdrawn from gambling dens and houses of prostitution; the saloon will not have advantages over every other business; careful and painstaking work will be the rule in city service, and jobbery and fraud will cease. The public official has great respect for the desires of the people, but it must not be an half-hearted demand of a few, but the intelligent, sincere, healthy opinion of the great masses of the people.

But the fact is the American people are too puffed up. We hear too much of

<sup>1</sup> Edwin L. Godkin, *The Problems of Municipal Government*, p. 2.

their rights and privileges, and not enough of their duties and responsibilities. Those who criticise and find fault are more numerous than those who willingly help to improve matters by doing their whole duty. Too much attention is also given to complaints and arguments of the idle and indolent class, who accuse government management of being responsible for bad times, low wages, tramps, and paupers. Their grievances are usually the result of defective personal character, ignorance, and the absence of industrial and frugal habits, and yet their influence in political matters with a good many of the more intelligent and thrifty people is astonishing. The great mass of the people give very little study to the abstruse problems of government. It would be asking a good deal to have all those who bitterly attack policies of government, methods of administration, and motives of officials to know anything of importance about the subject. Government is a science. Before men talk knowingly of

other sciences, they prepare themselves by study. A person would be considered a fool who would talk without positive knowledge of the details of chemistry, botany, geology, anatomy, or astronomy, but our curbstones are lined with men who have never seen a textbook on government and never spent an hour in serious study, who talk volumes in censure of our methods and officials, and their influence is plainly felt upon our political life. "The truth is that the source of all this bad city government is in the hearts of the people who live in the best residence quarters and do business in tall buildings and sit in the best seats of our churches. A great many of them are directly interested in the perpetuation of bad city governments; assessors who could not be bribed and city councils that would not give away franchises are precisely what they do not covet."<sup>1</sup> The latter class is fortunately

<sup>1</sup> *The Century Magazine*, July, 1895, as condensed and published in *Public Opinion*.

not in the majority, but their influence upon official life is direct and powerful. The very large majority of citizens, if the question was put directly to them, would say they favored good city government, but they favor it in a promiscuous and indifferent way. They are responsible for bad government by neglect of duty and lack of civic pride, energy, and local patriotism. As Franklin McVeagh said<sup>1</sup>: "The bad citizens are a hopeless minority. The good citizens are a hopeless majority. . . . No matter how much civic sentiment may float around in private life, it is only energized civic sentiment that wins in city politics." Too many of our good citizens are iconoclasts. They are devoting too much time to criticism and too little to practical work in effecting good government. A more wholesome and earnest civic spirit is needed. If our good citizens would take the pains to inform officials of their approval or disapproval of special

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of National Conference for Good City Government*, Philadelphia, 1894, p. 85.

acts of administration, as do those who are interested in bad government, a good deal would be quickly and easily accomplished. As Rev. Washington Gladden said<sup>1</sup> : "The men who try to do their duty in the municipal offices often feel that they are quite alone. . . . It is an extremely rare thing for a decent citizens to take pains to express the honor and admiration with which in his heart he regards a faithful public servant." Criticism of public affairs, either by way of censure or appreciation, to be effective, necessitates effort. Such effort is the rarest form of patriotism. There is plenty of patriotism to fight national battles, but, "like charity, that patriotism is best and truest that begins at our own fireside. Our people must be as willing to make a sacrifice for their city as for their country ; a spirit of local patriotism must be invoked."<sup>2</sup>

The education of the people to know

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Hon. Alva Adams, Address before the Monday-Evening Club, Pueblo, Colorado.

and to do their duty as citizens is a big undertaking. Workers may differ in their methods, but they should work in sympathy with each other and with officials. We believe the application of strict business principles will be more effective than moral preaching. It is easier to appeal to men through their purse than by way of their conscience. The moral welfare of the community is of great importance, but it is attained quicker as the result of good business principles than when made a direct object.

THE END.

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